

Treating Mr Hyde with faint disdain



ALASTAIR Campbell came under general attack in the House of Lords yesterday.

As the great columnist Molly Ivins of Austin, Texas, said when she became an object of hatred and ridicule for the far-right radio host Rush Limbaugh, "it's like being ganged up on by the court."

Those peers are just too darned nice. They are all the kind of people who say "Sorry" when you step on their toes.

The question about Mr Campbell had been asked by Lord Peyton of Yeovil, who as Lord Peyton used to be transported roughly at the time when the big transport issue was whether stage coaches could use smart cards to pay their turnpike tolls. Would the Government, he asked, define the role of the press secretary?

"This was courteous code for 'Why does this whinger snapper Campbell think he can send rude faxes to ministers telling them what to do — it would never have happened in my day?'"

Lord McIntosh, for the Government, said stolidly that Mr Campbell existed to give out the essential messages, the "what the Prime Minister can and co-ordinate these across government — whatever that meant."

Lord Peyton asked whether his real job was to stop Tony Blair from getting involved in unpleasantness — "to play Mr Hyde to the Prime Minister's Dr Jekyll?"

"That's perfectly correct. Mr Campbell is, to put it another way, Oddjob, or else that can with the steel teeth."

Sober stance, flagrant style

Andrew Clements

Ivo Pogorelich
Royal Festival Hall

ONLY the hairstyle, tied back into a neat bob, now hints at the flamboyant figure that Ivo Pogorelich used to present on the platform. But though his demeanour at the piano has become utterly sober and restrained, his playing still retains the capacity to bring delight in roughly equal proportions, although last night the first two qualities tended to outweigh the third.

When Pogorelich first erupted on to the international concert scene in 1980, he was the Warsaw Chopin Competition in 1980, he seemed to be a pianist of limitless potential. The occasional wilfulness seemed a small price to pay for such sovereign keyboard command, such an open readiness of tone, colour and touch.

But though the technique has remained intact, the wilfulness has grown; sometimes it remains under control as an attractive quirkiness that adds to his mystery and unpredictability, but all too often it devours his interpretations, leaving little but a series of provocative effects.

It certainly made short work of the set of Chopin's preludes that made up the first half of the programme. Along the way there were things to

working for whichever villain you care to name. As Tony Blair ought to say, "I myself abhor any unpleasantness, Mr Bond, but I regret that my associate Mr Campbell is less fussy than I am . . ."

Labour peers, who don't like Alastair Campbell much either, but hope in some cases to be ministers themselves, opted for gallingum comedy.

Lord Jenner asked whether Lord Strathclyde would have a word with Sir Bernard Ingham — Margaret Thatcher's old press secretary — and ask him "how he could run his office in a more reticent and self-effacing way". (The Lords irony tends to be splattered on with a paint roller.)

Lord McIntosh moved into hyper-sarcasm. Bernard Ingham had been a civil servant. He had always refrained from any views which could possibly be taken as party political, and had certainly never made any statements which reflected on the quality of ministers in the Thatcher government.

Lord Strathclyde turned to John Biffen, who Sir Bernard once famously called "a semi-detached member of the government." Now, as Lord Biffen, he sat on the Tory benches looking fully detached, indeed fully self-restrained. He responded with a quite accurate one on to describe as "ready for vacant possession."

Lord Strathclyde, a Tory front-bencher, wondered whether Mr Campbell's rude faxes to Harriet Harman and the Prime Minister were shared with the Prime Minister. Lord McIntosh said that he did not deny the importance of Alastair Campbell — "it is more than my job is worth to do so."

"As for his faxes to ministers," he said, "I have not seen the full authority of the Prime Minister."

The peers gasped — or would have gasped if they were hale enough to do anything so energetic. Instead they carried on with their business with a deep, sad, subterranean sigh, as if none of them had all died at once.

Mob attacks cause hostels to close doors to sex offenders ☐ **Supervision system now 'in danger'**

Vigilantes 'get upper hand'

Alan Truitt
Mano Affairs Editor

THE first signs of the breakdown of the system of supervision of sex offenders emerged yesterday, as ministers admitted that a wave of vigilante attacks has forced a greater number of probation hostels to close their doors to psychopaths.

Probation chiefs said at least 10 probation and bail hostels now refuse to accept sex offenders who have been released on bail because they fear attacks from local residents. The problem is believed recently to have got worse since the violent protests surrounding the release of serial killers Robert Oliver and Sidney Cooke.

The refusal by some hostels to take any sex offenders

means others have a high proportion among their residents. But even that is now being put in jeopardy as many more of the 101 probation hotels around the country are now also refusing to take sex offenders from outside their own immediate area.

"They don't want to become dumping grounds for the rest of their region," said Gillian Goss, executive director of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation. Ministers fear that it will become "difficult if not impossible to place these people."

More than 40 incidents of "outing" of sex offenders by local newspapers and vigilante protests and attacks have been released by chief probation officers. In some cases, probation officers, state residents and staff from a hostel when it was sur-

Belgian government survives

BELGIUM'S coalition government survived a parliamentary censure motion yesterday, following last week's escape from custody of Marc Dutoix, alleged serial child killer and convicted paedophile, but only after 100 members had forced the resignation of the country's chief of police.

Surrounded by a crowd of 400 people angry about a series of kidnappings, who in fact was not there, the government's survival was the first indications of the breakdown of the entire system of supervision of sex offenders and the lack of protection they can describe as the "the front line of public protection".

Graham Smith, Chief In-

Lieutenant-General WILLY Deridder, the head of the state gendarmerie, offered his resignation after meeting senior ministers a few hours before the no-confidence debate. The government said the vote on the censure motion lay 81-64 votes.

Coalition survives, page 6.

Inspector of Probation, said yesterday that "hostile managers were refusing to take sex offenders 'not because they can't handle, or cope with them, but because of the consequences from the local community doing something very different to the hotel and the staff there.'"

He said that local residents who attacked or picketed pro-

baton hostels to protect their children were achieving the opposite, as sex offenders could not be closely monitored if they were living alone.

Mr Smith said there were at present 430 sex offenders living in approved probation hostels. They have been convicted of a range of crimes from minor indecency charges to a few predatory paedophiles. In the past, they were monitored 24 hours a day, with staff watching where they went.

But the closure of the impact of the vigilante movement coincided with publication of a new study by the Chief Inspector of Probation, which concludes that supervision of sex offenders is highly effective.

It found that 93 per cent of sex offenders kept in hostels

were not reconducted among the highest rate group," says the Home Office Inspector. "In this study, the first in this area for seven years, that the quality of work undertaken by the probation service with sex offenders was testimony to the fact that the service was doing it well."

The inspectors found a high level of vigilance, and the treatment programmes used were designed to protect the public.

Home Office Minister, Joyce Quin, said the report showed the probation service was playing a vital role.

"If sex offenders are not able to be accommodated in this way, the danger to the community is great," she said, "and the danger to the public by driving them where they can be supervised, to a life underground where they may pose an even greater threat to children."

Time to throw away the dentist's drill?



I think it is the beginning of the end of fillings, frankly. But how soon depends on how much money we can get to do what we need to do in the field trials'

Prof Tom Lehner

In the dentist's chair . . . new vaccine could remove the widespread apprehensiveness which the experience induces

Vaccine 'could wipe out problem of tooth decay'

Sarah Boseley
Health Correspondent

A VACCINE to prevent tooth decay, which could make the terrors of the dentist's drill a thing of the past, has been developed by scientists at Guy's Hospital in London after 25 years of research, it was announced yesterday.

The vaccine is not injected but painted on to the teeth. It is colourless, tasteless and

holds no dangers because it is made up of antibodies like those naturally occurring in our immune system, say Tom Lehner and Julian Ma, who led the research.

They are excited by their breakthrough, first, because they have developed a vaccine that may be effective for as long as six months at a time, and second, because they have managed to genetically engineer plants to grow antibodies like those secreted by the gut, throat and lungs.

Results of the experimental group of 15 volunteers at Guy's hospital dental school have been very promising, but clinical trials are now needed before there are any decisions about the way the vaccine is used.

"I believe for the next few years the vaccine will be applied by dentists," said Professor Lehner. "But after a few years we could start experimenting with self-medication in tooth-paste or mouthwash or a lozenge that is sucked."

Tooth decay is not the problem of the young, but still affects half of all children by the age of five, and three quarters of all 17-year-olds.

The antibody in the vaccine works specifically on the proteins that attaches the damaging bacteria, *Streptococcus mutans*, to the teeth. The volunteers used a strong antiseptic mouthwash for nine days to rid the mouth of all bacteria.

and there were given a course of the vaccine—two coatings a week for three weeks.

At the end of that time, the space that had been colonized by streptococcus mutans on the teeth had been occupied by other, mostly benign, bacteria, and it could not return. The vaccine was given for another week in *Nature Medicine* magazine in New York.

Dr Ma said: "This vaccine is a breakthrough in the prevention of tooth decay. We have found a way of using plants to produce this vaccine in sufficient large quantities to make it available to everyone. It would not be possible otherwise."

A California-based company, Plant Biotechnology, has worked with the Guy's team to modify tobacco plants to grow the antibody. "The tobacco plant material will be negligible," said Dr Ma. "You can grow fields of the stuff."

But so far none of the pharmaceutical companies has offered to finance clinical trials. Professor Lehner said he did not know why a British company had not come forward to develop the idea commercially. "Somehow, we lack the will or entrepreneurial spirit that the Californians have."

Lehner said he had been asked by a friend from the "oil business" "I think it is time for oil drilling of the end, frankly."

But how soon depends on how much money we can get to do what we need to do in the field trials."

But the vaccine was not a threat to children to eat sweets and candy, and to eat toothbrushes. Too much sugar would overload the antibody protection, and brushing teeth is in any case vital for preventing gum disease, the scientists pointed out.

Professor Lehner can now see the end to his 25-year

The new vaccine has no side-effects, he said. "We put antibodies in our mouths all the time — when we drink cow's milk, for instance."

There is also excitement over the possibility of using antibodies to grow other vaccines. "It could be added to bodily secretions," he said. "They could be used to prevent infections from sexually transmitted diseases like candida, chlamydia, or even HIV."

Antibodies used prophylactically in intercourse might prevent the virus getting through," he said.

The British Dental Association said that the vaccine "could be an important advance", but stressed that even if it came into general use, the public should not abandon their current precautions.

Fat-cat barristers defend high legal aid fees after Lord Chancellor names and shames

continued from page one
time judge, received at least \$670,000 in legal aid payments in 1996-97, the biggest legal aid payment that year. Mr Trollope's name was the only one to appear on both lists.

He was paid between £270,000 and £319,000 from the legal aid fund covering civil cases and magistrates court criminal cases in that year. Ha also received between £400,000 and £450,000 from

criminal legal aid. But Mr Trollope said the figures in his case covered three financial years.

He specialises in serious white collar crime, though he has defended in a number of

Both the highest paid criminal QCs — Alun Jones, who received £575,000 and Peter Rook, just under £500,000 —

Daniel Brennan QC, who received more than £320,000 for civil work and who specialises in medical negli-

gence, said he had an 82 per cent success rate, which meant that most of his fees were repaid to the legal aid board by the losing party.


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Selling by numbers



Fanfare of publicity... The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra celebrates acquiring a useful licence plate to adorn one of its trucks

Personal plates spell big money

To the driver they are a matter of vanity, but to the Treasury a source of phone number profits

Nicholas Bannister, Chief Business Correspondent

BUYING a personalised number plate may be the ultimate in personal vanity, a public display of one's wit and wealth. But it has also become a licence to print money for the government, since the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency got the go-ahead to distribute previously unissued personalised plates in 1989.

Since then, the DVLA has raised more than £300 million for Treasury coffers by pandering to people's desire to make their cars stand out from their fellows.

The DVLA reported yesterday that it raised just under £50 million last year from sale of personalised plates. And it is expecting an even bigger bonanza when the "S" prefix is introduced this summer.

"The 'S' prefixed numbers just look right and there are a number of combinations which will be particularly attractive," said Byron Roberts, the DVLA's marketing manager.

ager. "SIMON is likely to be very valuable registration when we sell it at auction, while SINGH is expected to be one of the most valuable we have ever released. There has been terrific demand for that number for years."

Putting a value on a number, however, has been a headache for the DVLA. When it put KINGS up for auction it was expected to fetch about £15,000.

"The sale took place at Christie's in South Kensington," Mr Roberts said. "The bidding started at £10,000 and went to £15,000. By then there were just two very wealthy individuals involved. It was eventually sold for £231,000. Valuing numbers is not a science or an art, it is just guesswork."

About half the £60,000 or more personalised plates sold by the DVLA go to companies or other organisations, to attract attention to their vehicles and act as mobile advertisements for their goods and services. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, was given RI RPO for a new truck.

Individuals buy them for a myriad reasons, including self-aggrandisement, sentiment, fun and folly. Some just take a gamble, buy the plates as an investment, and hope to sell them at a profit later.

A Beatles fan earlier this month bought the RINGO plate for £5,000, while a Scotsman bought LAURA for £38,000 for his 15-year-old daughter Laura, as yet without car or driving licence.

Among the most famous purchases, albeit from the dealers who account for 55 per cent of the £80 million a year market in personalised plates, were MAGIC by magician Paul Daniels, and COMIC by comedian Jimmy Tarbuck.

Buying personalised numbers can be risky. Sultan Isam Dajani, a young Wiltshire pharmacist, bought a set as a gift for his girlfriend, but got dumped by her before he could give them to her.

However, he does not regret the purchase. He finds it is the P888 HOT plate, rather than the red MGF sports car which carries it, that excites comment.

Not all numbers are available. The DVLA has a pool of selected numbers, using all

the previous prefixes except C, D, E, F, and G, which can be bought over the phone, using a credit card. But the more valuable numbers are auctioned.

It does not, however, release numbers, partly because the DVLA does not want to disappoint classic car enthusiasts who want the original number plate on restored vehicles.

Classic numbers do not always go on classic or luxurious cars. "One of the first numbers we ever sold was LA, which went for £200,000," said Mr Roberts. "It was later seen on a long wheelbase, diesel Land-Rover, belching out clouds of blue smoke. The number plate was worth hundreds of times more than the vehicle."

Jobs under threat as exports dip

Charlotte Denny

THE threat of heavy redundancies was hanging over industry yesterday as new evidence showed the strength of sterling has driven exporters' confidence to its lowest level since the recession of the 1980s.

The fragile state of the manufacturing sector was confirmed by separate data showing Britain's trading deficit has ballooned to an eight year high. The figures showed that the underlying trend was for the trade figures to worsen, according to the Office for National Statistics.

A survey by the Confederation of British Industry published yesterday found manufacturers preparing to cut investment and lay off workers. Almost two thirds of exporters think the outlook will worsen over the next three months, while only 10 per cent are expecting an improvement - the gloomiest assessment of prospects for 18 years.

City analysts said the survey showed the depth of the crisis facing British manufacturing. "Every component of the survey is weaker and many are pointing to recession," said Simon Briscoe of the Japanese bank Nikko Europe.

John O'Sullivan, of NatWest markets, said it was a "truly dreadful report, even by the standards of recent gloomy manufacturing surveys... A shake-out from manufacturing payrolls is imminent."

The CBI last night pleaded with the Bank of England not to make matters worse by increasing interest rates.

ernment could do little to take the pressure off sterling, the CBI's chief economist, Kate Barker, said. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, "had not properly taken on board" the problems exporters faced with the rise in the value of the pound against foreign currencies.

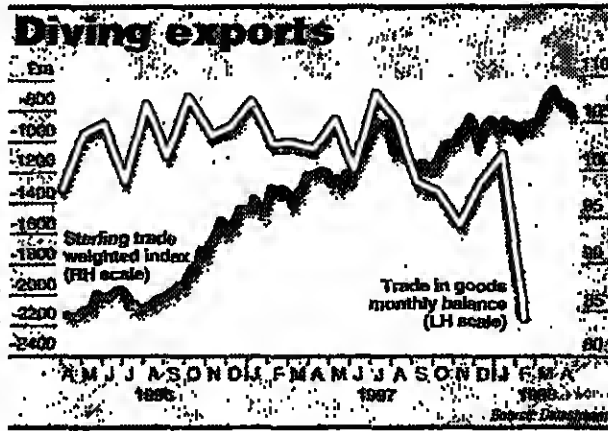
Official figures released yesterday showed the pound's strength is sucking in cheap imports and causing exports to slide. The trade deficit increased to £2.2 billion in February, the highest monthly figure since March 1990, the dying days of the last economic boom. Exports were flat, while the value of imports rose by 7.5 per cent.

Analysts said the ballooning current account deficit could undermine the Government's economic programme. "A couple more monthly numbers on this scale would really threaten the balance in the economy," Mr Briscoe said.

Despite the gloomy news from the export sector, the CBI's director, Adair Turner, told an audience of York business people last night that industry had as little interest in an undervalued pound as in an overvalued one.

The long term challenge was to improve Britain's productivity against its competitors, which would increase economic growth.

"In the 1990s Britain managed to cut the productivity gap versus our competitors but over the last three years our growth has slowed while that of our competitors has accelerated... If we copied best practice in manufacturing, our GDP could increase by £80 billion a year," Mr Turner said.



Sultan Isam Dajani with the registration that was to have been a gift for his girlfriend

Pithy and pricey

Highest priced number plates sold through the DVLA's Classic Collection auctions:

1. K1 NGS £231,000
2. 1 A £200,000
3. 1 RR £106,000
4. 1 S £100,000
5. G1 LLY £87,500
6. P1 LOT £82,500
7. 1 DM £75,000
8. 1 J £75,000
9. ELV 1S £75,000
10. N1 GEL £75,000

TV brings no violence to St Helena

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

AREMARKABLE experiment with children who had never been exposed to television has shown that its introduction to the tiny community of St Helena has not created a surge in violence.

The study undermines previous research which had suggested a link between television violence and anti-social behaviour.

"St Helena has given us a unique opportunity to look at children's behaviour both before and after the introduction of television in a real-life setting," said Professor Tony Charlton, who is leading the research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The researchers, who filmed children at play during school breaks in the South Atlantic British colony, found no increase in hitting, punching, pinching or fighting. Television was introduced to the community in 1995.

The findings back up research among teenagers on the island.

"Much of the evidence which suggests television is a

negative influence has come from artificial laboratory environments," Prof Charlton said. "What we are seeing is that violence on television is not a direct cause of violent behaviour in young people. A healthy family, school and community environment are more important influences in shaping behaviour."

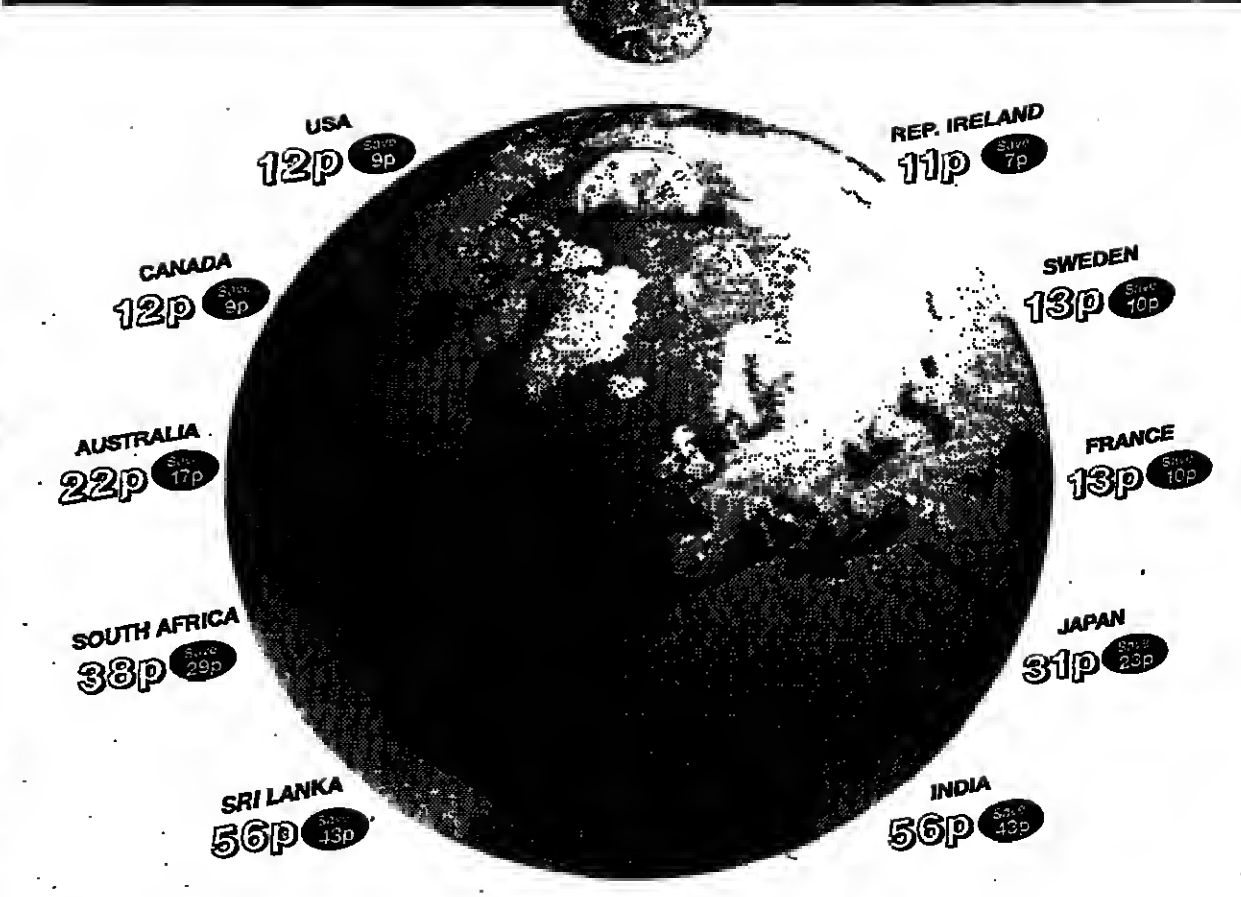
In January a Home Office study suggested that there was a link between criminal behaviour and violent videos for those who were already in "vulnerable" situations.

In the United States the link between a violent society and television appeared to be

strengthened when a study revealed that the average US child would see 38,000 murders, 40,000 attempted murders and 250,000 acts of violence on television before the age of 18.

In St Helena, although the levels of violence on the cable networks beamed into the island are slightly higher than on television in Britain, and there is no viewing "watershed", Prof Charlton said the strong sense of community affected children's behaviour. Older children operated a "neighbourhood watch" which made it hard for youngsters to misbehave.

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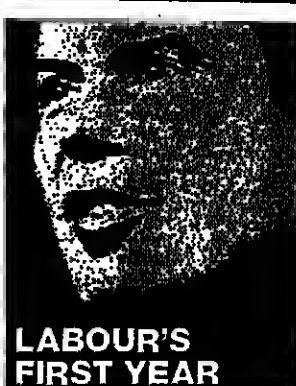
There is an activism inherent in writing, but then there's the activism inherent in being active literally... activism that feels right to you is probably your activism, and...you should stick with it"

Alice Walker on politics, race and sexuality

Arts, G2 page 8

A party looking over its shoulder at the SNP

One year on and the country's first Labour government in nearly 20 years claims to be achieving real success. But has it made any impact on an impoverished town like Airdrie? EWEN MACASKILL Investigates



LABOUR'S FIRST YEAR



Airdrie High Street in Monklands, where voters will want to see change before returning Labour for another term of office

PHOTOGRAPHS: MURDO MacLEOD

HELLEN Liddell stepped out of her constituency office in Airdrie, Lanarkshire, four boys, barely teenagers, shouted: "Yo Helen Liddell, Vote Labour." The Treasury Minister smiled at this unsolicited confirmation of Labour's strength in her West of Scotland seat, one year into government. Her smile did not last long. One of the youths crossed the road and stopped her. "I'm a junkie," he said, before embarking on a tirade against the police before leaving to see his lawyer.

The Airdrie and Shotts constituency, John Smith's old Monklands seat, is a desperate place, with poverty and unemployment to match the worst estates in Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and London. It is a bleak, post-industrial landscape, dominated by quarries, landfill sites and open-cast mining, topped off with two prisons. Civil Britannia has no resonance here, among the thousands of damp, grey-brown, pebbledash, council-built homes.

As if this community did not have enough problems, it is also riven by sectarianism, the worst outside Northern Ireland. In the by-election that followed Smith's death in 1994 a poster was displayed prominently in one of the former mining villages: "No Pope Here". Scrawled underneath was a telling testimony to the quality of life in Airdrie and Shotts: "Lucky Pope".

This constituency and many like it throughout Britain will be the real test of Tony Blair's government. Eighteen years of Conservative rule, for all its claims of economic success, did nothing for areas like this. One year into the Labour government, nothing has

changed. Few would expect otherwise, given the short time scale, but Labour activists will not be as forgiving if there is still no visible improvement after five years. Labour has much to be smug about as it approaches its anniversary, at least in England, where politics is dominant and the opposition parties nearly invisible. Not so Scotland, where Labour is panicking. The Scottish National Party, well behind Labour last summer, has closed the gap, neck and neck at 40 per cent in a recent opinion poll. Blair, in Edinburgh in September, hailed an overwhelming referendum vote for the restoration of a Scottish parliament. It would, he said, cement the union. The opposite is happening.

Downing Street and the Labour headquarters at Millbank only recently woke up to the extent of restlessness in Scotland, and in the last month money and resources have been pouring north. Labour is embarking on the modernisation of its Scottish party and rethinking its strategy for combating the SNP.

The contrast between the way Labour is seen in Scotland and in England was brought home to a Scottish Labour MP who returned to his constituency at the weekend after campaigning in council elections in England. "In London it was all positive," he said, but in Scotland there was "a sense of disenchantment". At a constituency meeting he was struck by the applause for a member of the audience who stood up to express disillusionment. Although Liddell only just beat the SNP in the by-election, she converted that into a 16,000 majority last year. If the SNP were to sweep Scotland



The late party leader John Smith remembered by a swimming pool in his constituency of Monklands

this would be one of the last places to fall. But there is a whisper being heard elsewhere in Scotland, of the danger for Labour.

While expressing general satisfaction with Blair, Labour sympathisers and activists will still throw in a grievance or two. What worries Labour is that there is no single cause of resentment, just an underlying, barely tangible sense of disappointment. Among issues raised were lone parents, disability benefits, tuition fees, a squeeze in local government spending, and above all the West of Scotland council scandals. There was no thanks for delivering devolution.

John Smith Court, a complex of sheltered homes for the elderly and disabled, is a good example of what Labour is up against. One of the staff, sitting opposite a portrait of the former Labour leader, has voted Labour all her life but waves her hand to suggest she is now swithering. The reason: Robin Cook's affair. "I am moralistic in my own life," she said. And to compound the problem for Labour, added: "I do not support the SNP but I would like to see an independent Scotland."

There are few reminders of Smith in the constituency: just the sheltered homes and a renamed swimming pool. And few people, even party members, mention him. History is being rewritten in London to suggest Smith, a traditionalist, would not have won a substantial majority at the general election, or might not even have won at all. Surprisingly, given the tribalism of Scotland, this is viewed in the constituency, and Blair emerges well by comparison. One party activist who had worked with Smith did express disappointment that Millbank was not named John Smith House, as had been promised. But the same activist praised Blair for his radical transformation of the party and his appeal beyond Labour's usual constituency: "John would not have won."

He was a good, competent politician but he did not have that extra bit of flair." The by-election that followed his death was one of the nastiest fought in Britain this century, dominated by religion. Airdrie is strongly Protestant, and candidates were spat on and pelted with bottles as the bile rose. It became poisonous when Liddell attended a meeting organised by a Christian Fellowship, a Catholic, walked down the aisle to a sullen stamping of feet and growls of "Fenian bastard". A fellow Labour MP quipped afterwards: "If this is the Christians, show me the lions."

The village of Harthill, as

profoundly Protestant as Belfast's Shankill Road, is represented on North Lanarkshire council by Charles O'Duffy. He felt qualified to act as a neutral observer of Labour and the SNP, being both an Independent and district master of the Orange Order. "The SNP is not as powerful as in the rest of the country, but it would be foolish to suggest it is not making inroads." He believed Scotland was heading towards independence; that the party was building up a momentum.

One of the handful of SNP councillors in the constituency, Graham Russell, represents and lives in the Craigmiles ward, a grim housing scheme built on the outskirts of Airdrie after the second world war. Russell, who runs a chauffeur firm, mainly driving brides around, said: "People waited 18 years for Labour to deliver and nothing has happened. They are Tories by another name. The Labour councillors keep a smiling profile but in private they tell you it is a disaster."

At SNP headquarters the line from the strategists is that people had made a fundamental switch in favour of independence in the 1980s but felt constrained by a need to get the Tories out, and that meant voting Labour. With the Conservatives gone, they felt free to vote for the SNP.

Labour is convinced that independence is not popular, and that in the end what matters to people is jobs, health and education. Labour has to deliver on these, especially jobs, a view shared by the party locally. It will not be easy.

On the stairs outside the benefits office in Airdrie were empty bottles of Buckfast, Irn Bru and Hooch. It had not

been a one-off party. On a low roof opposite, a convenient dumping ground, were scattered signs of the SNP. The Hooch suggested youthful drinkers, not an unreasonable assumption given that young people make up much of the traffic in and out of the office. The constituency has the highest level of youth unemployment in Scotland outside Glasgow and Dundee.

Karen Turnbull, Liddell's agent and a possible candidate for the Scottish parliament, sympathised: "It is not acceptable that young people can go so long without a job. There are 22 and 23-year-olds who have never worked." The Government is making a start, with 277 young people who have been unemployed for six months or more being offered places on the New Deal scheme.

But how successful can such schemes be in the long run in a constituency that can boast only one big private sector employer? The jobs are just not there, and that is before another recession bites, as lots of Labour people assume it will. It will require a huge shift in resources — well beyond the £70 million the Government has so far committed to the New Deal in Scotland — to make a difference.

Keir Hardie, whose family home straddles the constituency border, would have been up for it. The question over the next four to 10 years is whether those who inherited his party, in spite of their reluctance to use the word socialism, are also up for it.

TOMORROW: Jonathan Freedland examines the performance of Tony Blair, and asks whether a year in power has changed him

privatised utilities, the £2.5 billion New Deal was launched with the aim of getting 250,000 of those under 25 off benefit.

Five triumphs . . .

- **Worship in Ireland** With the law apparently close to collapse Tony Blair dashed to Belfast declaring the "hand of history" was on his shoulder. By the end of the Long Good Friday an agreement had been signed.
- **Constitutional reform** Devolution for Scotland and Wales, the human rights bill incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into British law, the promise of a freedom of information act, proportional representation for European elections and probably a mayor for London, have been tackled at whirlwind pace.
- **Welfare to Work** Funded using the windfall tax on

- **Education spending** The Government has pumped an extra £2.5 billion into the school system; new measures introduced to raise standards and ensure nursery education for all four-year-olds, plus a maths hour and a reading hour in every primary school, and £1,000 for every school to buy new books.
- **Worldwide Blairmania** "Marvelous, brilliant, astonishing, exceptional, elegant" was how a French minister described Blair's speech to the National Assembly in March. Blair's love-in with Clinton was another success. He visited the Middle East with the badge of peacemaker firmly pinned to his lapel.

. . . and five setbacks

- **Bernie Ecclestone** Formula 1 was exempted from a tobacco advertising ban after Blair met motor racing chiefs. It later emerged that Mr Ecclestone, head of the sport's governing body, had given £1 million to the party. Blair publicly apologised, and Labour returned the cash.
- **Welfare reforms** Proposed Government cuts to single parent benefit split the Cabinet and 47 Labour MPs voted against. After mounting pressure the Government was forced effectively to restore the cuts.
- **Brown's biography** A semi-sanctioned biography about Chancellor Gordon Brown said he still wanted to be prime

minister and had not forgiven Blair for denying him the leadership in 1994. Some at No 10 reportedly regarded the Chancellor as "psychologically flawed".

□ **Irvine's wallpaper** Lord Chancellor Derry Irvine justified spending £550,000 on the refurbishment of his official House of Lords apartment saying it was a "Guernsey-based" "be grateful". The refurbishment included wallpaper reproduced from the designs by Augustus Pugin and hung at a cost of £57,000.

□ **Geoffrey Robinson** Millionaire Paymaster General Geoffrey Robinson put his fortune into a Guernsey-based "blind" trust. Newspaper investigations suggested the Treasury minister still retained some control. He was also accused of tax avoidance as the trust was based offshore.

And how was it for you?



DOUG McAVOY, general secretary, National Union of Teachers: "Class sizes are down, nursery vouchers and the assisted places scheme have been abolished. There is more respect for teachers and their views. Teachers' concerns about the primary curriculum have been taken seriously. "There are things Labour has done that we are not happy about like naming and shaming schools. They did it once and they haven't done it again. However, it is the first time in 19 years we can say we are impressed overall."



MELVYN BRAGG, arts broadcaster: "It has been a remarkable first year. Tony Blair's government has achieved far more than most people thought possible. "They also make it clear that they know there is a long way to go, but they know they are going to get there in the future."



J G BALLARD, author: "The government of the country is now a non-stop public relations campaign, the chief client being the English middle classes. But the public seems to like it like that. "Ideology is at an end and advertising slogans have taken its place."



SALLY GREENGROSS, director general of Age Concern: "Despite the emphasis on younger people in the slogans of new Britain, the Labour government has taken limited actions to address the needs of older people over the winter. "However, the Government must realise that older people cannot afford to wait for an endless round of reviews. Today's pensioners need to know they can get the support they need when they need it."



ECOWESHUN, editor of Arena: "I think that Tony Blair's government has managed to reinvigorate a sense of nation and potential for Britain, which has been good. But it seems with that there is a national obsession for how that was created — which is spin. "They have been great at imagining and inspiring, which has perhaps outstripped some of the practical things they have been able to do."



NORMAN LAMONT, former Tory chancellor: "I think they have done quite good things with the economy; making the Bank of England independent was brilliant and right. "But the rest of it, as they say in Texas, is all hat and no cattle. Any government that spends all that time on public relations is bound to come unstuck."



Kamal Ahmed on a TV show exposing how the Japanese, Germans, Americans and really behave on their holidays

Holiday

GERMANIES: The Germans are a very different people to the British. They are very organized and very efficient. They are very hardworking and very ambitious. They are very successful in many ways. They are very proud of their country and their culture. They are very loyal to their family and their friends. They are very respectful of their elders and their superiors. They are very disciplined and very obedient. They are very polite and very courteous. They are very clean and very tidy. They are very honest and very trustworthy. They are very brave and very courageous. They are very kind and very generous. They are very smart and very intelligent. They are very beautiful and very attractive. They are very happy and very content. They are very healthy and very strong. They are very wealthy and very successful. They are very powerful and very influential. They are very respected and very admired. They are very loved and very cherished. They are very happy and very content. They are very healthy and very strong. They are very wealthy and very successful. They are very powerful and very influential. They are very respected and very admired. They are very loved and very cherished.

School wins chance to stress ethos of Islam

NEW CHAUCHARY Education Correspondent
A primary school in London has been given the go-ahead to become the first in the country to introduce a formal curriculum of Islamic values and beliefs. The school, which is a voluntary-aided Muslim primary, will be the first to do so. The curriculum will be based on the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad. It will cover topics such as the five pillars of Islam, the importance of prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. It will also cover the history and culture of Islam. The school's headteacher, who is a Muslim, said that the school had been approached by the local Muslim community to introduce such a curriculum. He said that the school was happy to do so, as it was a way of helping the children to understand their own faith and culture better. He said that the curriculum would be taught by a Muslim teacher, who would be trained in Islamic studies. The curriculum would be taught as part of the school's religious education lessons. The school's headteacher said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to develop a strong sense of their own identity and faith. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would also help the children to understand and respect the beliefs and cultures of other people. The school's headteacher said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become good Muslims and good citizens. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are honest, trustworthy, and respectful of others. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are kind, generous, and helpful. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are smart, intelligent, and successful. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are happy and content. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are healthy and strong. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are wealthy and successful. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are powerful and influential. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are respected and admired. He said that he hoped that the curriculum would help the children to become people who are loved and cherished.

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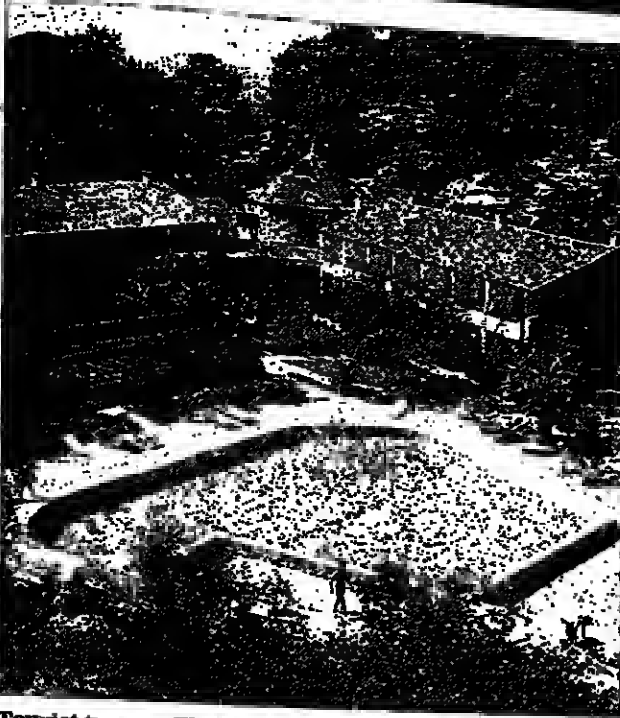
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Vacations by nations



Tourist trap... The Sultan Palas Hotel in Dalaman, Turkey

Kamal Ahmed on a TV series exposing how the Japanese, Germans, Americans and Brits really behave on their holidays



British holidaymakers enjoying a toga party, which the Germans disdained until provided with clean sheets. Overall, hotel staff rated the Japanese most fun

Holiday stereotypes fall into sun trap

GERMANS have towels to defend their sun-lingers, Americans are loud, the Japanese are reserved and the British drunk — such are the stereotypes of different nation's holidaymakers.

But all that is about to be torn asunder by a documentary series which used hidden cameras to show the best and worst sides of national characteristics.

The Channel 4 programme, for which holidaymakers were not told they were being filmed, will reveal that of the above list only the British act to type — drinking into the small hours night after night.

The programme makers invited groups of tourists from those four countries to the Sultan Palas Hotel in Dalaman, Turkey, and secretly filmed them in set-up situations.

The Germans were the only group to send back a bottle of wine laced with vinegar, the British stole the beer but did not mind the queue-jumpers,

and the Japanese were so shocked when a planted actor began showering in the nude that they turned their backs on him and demanded he put on a towel.

The most upsetting thing for the Americans was finding someone had burned their flag above the bar. One holidaymaker said she wanted to take the remains home and "dispose of them properly".

There were also surprising reactions to a "drunk" coach driver, who was meant to take the tourists on a trip.

The British refused to get on the bus, the Japanese seemed unconcerned until the group leader noticed that the driver had a bottle of spirits at his feet, and the Germans were more concerned that he would be sacked if they made too much fuss.

"I don't want to blame him," one German said to hotel staff. "Maybe he loses his job, maybe he has children."

When the tourists were given an afternoon off the British went and played foot-

Myth and reality

THE JAPANESE
Myth: They are cold, uncommunicative and walk around in Indian file photographing anything that moves.
Reality: The party liked nothing better than a good knees-up, with plenty of drink and were the keenest participants in the toga party.
Do say: Where's the party?
Don't say: Kodak.

THE GERMANS
Myth: Austere with no sense of humour. They carry towels around to claim sun-lingers first.
Reality: Least fun-loving group (they had to be given

clean sheets before they would take part in the toga party), although they showed a caring streak dealing with the "drunk" coach driver. Only group to send back wine laced with vinegar.
Do say: I'll put a spot of bleach on that.
Don't say: Who's for charades?

THE AMERICANS
Myth: Outgoing, fun-loving cheerleaders who have only come across Turkey on Thanksgiving and like everybody as long as they don't smoke.
Reality: Reserved group, baffled by Turkish baths.

Didn't like someone burning their flag but allowed a smoker on non-smoking bus — then lit up as well.
Do say: Got a light?
Don't say: No worry, it's only a flag.

THE BRITISH
Myth: Hard drinking, partying, sunbathing holidaymakers who would rather play football in the rain than see the sights.
Reality: Hard drinking, partying, sunbathing holidaymakers who would rather play football in the rain than see the sights.
Do say: Where's the bar?
Don't say: I hear the museum is very good.

mony and said nothing, the Germans had a vote and asked him to put it out — while the Americans ignored him and started smoking themselves.

None of the nationalities complained openly when they were served deliberately poor food. In another set-up the bar was left unattended and an actor started pretending to steal beer.

The British, chosen after adverts were placed in local papers in the Midlands, joined in with gusto, as did the Americans. The Japanese were horrified and told the bar staff later, and the Germans also refused to take part.

But the programme makers agreed that the Germans were the most sombre group. During a toga evening when the guests were asked to bring the sheets from their beds, the Germans were reluctant to take part, only agreeing when the hotel staff produced clean sheets so they would not have to strip their beds.

Police free boy torture victim

Geoffrey Gibbs

A 12-YEAR-OLD torture victim was receiving hospital treatment for hundreds of injuries last night after being found tied to banisters during a police raid on a house in Dorset.

Police officers and ambulance paramedics who went to the property in Poole were horrified at the extent of the violence inflicted on the boy. None had ever seen such a serious case of child abuse.

It is thought that he may have been tortured and starved for three weeks, during which he was forced to stand on drawing pins and was beaten with a variety of weapons.

Dorset police yesterday refused to comment on the case but said they were questioning the mother and two other women who lived at the property. The two, both in their 30s and from the Creekmoor area of Poole, were in custody "following allegations of serious assault in respect of a 12-year-old male".

Medical staff at Poole hospital refused to comment on the nature of the injuries, which reportedly reduced one nurse to tears.

It is understood that the beatings left the boy with a fractured skull and jaw, and damage to his wrists and ankles.

A hospital spokeswoman said: "We can confirm that the child is a patient in the children's unit. He is making a reasonable recovery. No surgery is planned at present."

It is believed that the boy's ordeal, which included starvation, may have lasted for three weeks.

He was tied so tightly that the circulation to his wrists had been cut off.

Police raided the address late on Sunday following a tip from a member of the public, and immediately called paramedics to the scene.

Two other children at the address have been taken to a place of safety by social workers and placed in care.

Police and social services are carrying out a joint investigation.

School wins chance to stress ethos of Islam

Vivak Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

A PRIMARY school in Liverpool is to become the first local authority administered school to have a strong Islamic ethos, following a deal between the city council and Muslim organisations.

The school is due to open in September next year to cater for up to 400 pupils aged between five and 11 in the inner city Granby area, where most of the city's Muslim community lives. It will be open to all faiths, but its timetable will include Islamic assemblies, the teaching of Islamic history, and religious education with an emphasis on Islam.

It will offer food suitable for Muslim pupils, and give holidays for Muslim festivals. An attempt will be made to have a significant number of Muslim school governors.

The ground-breaking venture follows a decision to close Granby Junior school and Tiber county primary school, both of which suffered from falling rolls, and amalgamate them into one school with an Islamic ethos, on a site that has yet to be decided.

Local non-Muslim parents claim that the plan for the school was imposed by the city council, and that the number of Muslim pupils in the two schools does not justify the decision — 50 per cent of pupils at Granby are Muslim, and 30 per cent at Tiber.

There are 61 independent Muslim schools in the country, and two more were awarded state funding in January, but none is directly run by a local education authority.

Ann Melville of the Liverpool authority said: "This will not be a grant maintained school or a Muslim school. It will be a regular, local authority administered school with an Islamic ethos. We will have the same admission policy as we have for our other schools. There is a significant Mus-

lim population in the Granby and Toxteth areas of Liverpool and we wanted to have a school that reflected the make-up of the area where full recognition is given to the Islamic faith."

The school, which has not been named, is supported by Labour and Liberal Democrat Liverpool city councillors, and the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, has been asked for his approval.

The authority says that pupils who do not wish to take part in Islamic assemblies or other activities will not be compelled to do so and that all others faiths will be recognised.

Paul Chata, a councillor and Liberal Democrat spokesman on education, said: "We want Islam to be treated on an equal basis with other religions, and that's why this school is being formed."

"The Muslim community does not want an exclusively Muslim school but wants a school that reflects the cultural diversity of the city. There has been some disquiet but, if the Muslim community wants a school in which it can feel comfortable, then, as a matter of equal opportunity, it's only fair that it should have one."

Councillors have set up a working group to establish how a school with an Islamic ethos would operate. They are also considering plans to apply for foundation status, which will replace grant maintained status under government proposals, and would give them the right to set aside a major part of places on the school board for Muslim governors.

Akram Khan-Cheema, an education consultant who has been involved in setting up the school, said: "It's a very exciting and imaginative proposal."

"The school will not be just for Muslims and will offer something to the whole community, regardless of their religion. It will give others a chance to see what an Islamic ethos is all about."



Aisha Hussein and her six children, who all attend Tiber county primary school in Toxteth

PHOTOGRAPH: HOWARD BARLOW

'Lack of consultation' angers parents

STORM clouds gathered over Tiber county primary school yesterday as pupils emerged to meet their parents at the end of the school day, writes David Ward.

It could have been an omen: Divine rage at or divine support for a plan to create a school with a Muslim ethos in Toxteth, Liverpool's racial melting pot.

Tiber is three years away from the century it will

never see it, as planned, the demolition squad moves in in the summer of 1999.

"If this school goes, the heart will be taken out of the community," said Linda Harwood as she collected her two sons. "We have been told that the new school will be multi-faith with a Muslim ethos and would welcome people of all faiths and none."

That, she suggested, implied a contradiction which no one had yet explained.

About 30 per cent of Tiber's 150 pupils are Muslim, but non-Muslims are not so much worried about religion as angry at the council for lack of consultation.

The plan is that a new school with a Muslim ethos open nearby, possibly on the site of the former St Bernard's Roman Catholic school.

This suits Aisha Hussein who has six children at Tiber. "I do not ask for my children to be taken out of Christian prayers," she said. "But it would be nice to have a Muslim school."

"This is nothing to do with the opening of a new Muslim school," Ms Harwood said.

"We are angry because we only found out it was going ahead from the press."

"The kids are quite happy here and we have a very good parent-teacher relationship."

She said a consultation meeting in June last year had been attended by only nine parents because it was said the school was not part of the reorganisation plan.

"Then I picked up the [Liverpool] Echo on February 3 and saw we were part of it."

"Our fight is for the new school to be in the Tiber building. I'll send my kids here but I won't send them to a site near Granby Street, where the drug dealers are."

EU health curbs lifted by court

Stephen Bates in Brussels

A RULING by the European Court of Justice yesterday opened the way to thousands of patients from Britain and continental countries being able to shop around for medical treatment across the European Union.

The Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice yesterday ruled that regulations by medical insurance or state health services trying to deter patients from visiting other countries for treatment or medical supplies are a barrier to free trade.

"It means there is nothing in future to stop a woman living in Dover seeking medical treatment in Calais or Ostend," a court spokesman said.

The ruling appears to clear the way for patients to claim at least out-patient treatment at hospitals in other EU member states and to purchase equipment abroad such as spectacles for which they can later claim reimbursement.

It is less clear whether patients would be eligible to have long-stay treatment or operations reimbursed, or whether the actual cost would be met rather than the cost of treatment in the patient's home state.

Yesterday's court decision arose from two cases brought by Luxembourg residents, who both sought repayments after seeking treatment just

over the border of the tiny duchy, in Germany and Belgium.

One, Nicolas Decker, had been denied repayment for a pair of spectacles, purchased in the nearest town in Belgium, less than 20 miles away from his home in Luxembourg.

The other, Raymond Kohll, had wanted his daughter's dental treatment to be carried out in Trier, just over the border in Germany, following a tip from the Luxembourg social insurance department was refused on the grounds that the treatment was not urgent and could have waited to be carried out in his own country.

Both were claiming under Luxembourg's social security system in which claimants pay for treatment and apply for reimbursement from the state.

The court ruled the refusals amounted to an unjustified barrier to the EU's free movement of goods and services.

In its judgement the court stated: "Such rules constitute a barrier to free movement as they encourage insured persons to purchase medical products of Luxembourg rather than in other member states."

A Department of Health spokesman in London said: "We are still studying the implications of the judgment. It certainly seems as if it allows treatment abroad but it may be hospital treatment is excluded."

Fergie flaunts family affairs as post-divorce 'role model'

THE Duchess of York heaped fresh embarrassment on the royal family yesterday by revealing that she and her former husband do not bring lovers back to their shared Berkshire home, writes Luke Harding.

In a cringe-making adaptation of sporting phraseology, she confessed that she and the Duke of York carry on their affairs "away from home".

"We play away games," she said.

Her disclosure was made to the American chat show host

Jay Leno — and to several million US viewers.

Sarah revealed that she and the duke had agreed a no-sex pact at their Sunninghill home — where she occupies the bottom floor, and he the top — for the sake of their daughters Beatrice and Eugenie. But she insisted that her living arrangements are a good role model for other divorced couples.

"Andrew and I believe in co-parenting. That is what it is called," she said.

Countdown to confrontation begins as UN enrages Iraq

Isa Black
Diplomatic Editor

IRAQIS celebrated Saddam Hussein's birthday yesterday as the countdown began to the next crisis over the sanctions which the United Nations insists must remain in force until all its banned weapons are scrapped.

From Baghdad to Basra the country's official media showed praise for the president on his 61st birthday. And there was angry condemnation of the UN's decision to keep sanctions in place after defiant warnings from Iraq and mounting international demands for some relief.

Security Council members, reviewing the sanctions for the first time in nearly a year, decided early yesterday, after hearing a report from the UN's chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler, that there would be no change.

Mr Butler is head of the UN Special Commission, Unscoc, which has to certify that Iraq has dismantled all banned weapons before the sanctions, imposed after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, can be lifted.

The United States and Britain acknowledged — to stave off a resolution backed by Russia, France and China — that progress had been made in dismantling nuclear weapons, though all agree there is work to be done on chemical and biological weapons.

Mr Butler revealed yesterday that in recent weeks UN inspectors had found artillery shells filled with mustard gas.

But it is becoming increasingly clear that to keep sanctions intact Washington and London will be forced to see their veto, which would be a severe blow to the international unity they are finding hard to maintain.

Iraq's foreign minister,

Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, who made an unprecedented appeal to the council on Monday, yesterday blamed the decision on the "lies and allegations" of Unscoc inspectors, "supported by only two members... namely the United States of America and the United Kingdom".

With Baghdad hotly insisting it has destroyed its banned weapons, the UN decision opens up the prospect of new confrontations on inspection.

Twice in the past six months the US and Britain have been poised to launch air strikes against Iraq because of Baghdad's refusal to allow free access to sensitive sites.

Both are now braced for the collapse of February's 11th-hour deal between President Saddam and the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

UN inspectors visited eight presidential sites after the agreement but found no weapons.

Mr Annan has said the agreement provides for repeated checks of those sites by inspectors accompanied by diplomats. But Mr Sahhaf insisted that access was not open ended.

Even hawkish acknowledgment that the sanctions are doing more harm to ordinary people than to the regime.

Last week Britain convened a conference to find ways of relieving the suffering of Iraqis while keeping the measures in place. But hopes of winning wide international support were dashed when Kuwait was the only Arab invitee to attend. Russia did not send a representative.

Arab concern at the humanitarian situation will be high on the agenda of talks in London today between Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, representing the European Union, and the foreign ministers of the six-member Gulf Co-operation Council.



Iraqi soldiers celebrate Saddam Hussein's 61st birthday yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH BY AWAD AWAD

Fraud inquiry puts France on brink of constitution crisis

Paul Webster in Paris

ROLAND DUMAS, chairman of France's constitutional council, may be arrested today when two examining magistrates and a public prosecutor visit his country home near Bordeaux to question him about a long-running financial arms-sales scandal.

The judicial moves to link Mr Dumas, aged 75, with an international fraud will cause a constitutional crisis. The nine-member constitutional council which Mr Dumas heads rules on disputes about legislation. President Jacques Chirac, a Gaullist, is impatient to replace the Socialist former foreign minister with a right-wing nominee, to gain some advantage in the "cohabitation" struggle with the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin.

Mr Dumas, chosen by his closest political friend, the late President Francois Mitterrand, has twice declined to answer summonses for questioning, saying he needed to rest after an operation.



Dumas: to face questioning about arms-sales scandal

The decision to interrogate him at home and threaten him with custody reflects the exasperation of the judicial team, determined to throw light on backhanders paid during the sale of six frigates to Taiwan when Mr Dumas was foreign minister.

The case has its ridiculous side: Mr Dumas is to be asked mainly about two pairs of Italian-made-to-measure shoes which cost more than £2,500. The examining magistrates,

Eva Joly and Laurence Vichnievsky, will ask Mr Dumas if there is a link between \$2.5 million deposited in his account and a policy change at the foreign ministry, which at first opposed the frigate sale to avoid offending China. They want to know whether commissions approved by the presidential entourage were paid to middlemen or illegally siphoned into other private accounts.

Yesterday the judges' office confirmed that if Mr Dumas answers were unsatisfactory a judicial interrogation process preliminary to prosecution would begin.

The procedure allows the prosecutor, Jean-Pierre Dittmar, to issue a custody order or approve a form of house arrest while Mr Dumas is questioned.

Even if Mr Dumas were bailed he would be under pressure to resign, since the inquiry is holding up constitutional council decisions on disputed legislation. The government and rightwing opposition have both forced other ministers and officials to resign during fraud inquiries.

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Arms treat for old Yeltsin ally

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

PRESIDENT Yeltsin brought his disgraced former defence minister Pavel Grachev back into the Kremlin fold yesterday, appointing him chief military adviser to Russia's main arms exporter, Rosvooruzheniye.

The move confirms that Mr Yeltsin wants proven allies controlling potential sources of campaign funds before the next presidential election in 2000. It may also signal Russia's determination to sell weapons to countries considered "pariah states" by Washington.

During the day, several senior figures were also nominated by the new prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, to join his government.

No first deputy prime ministers were named, but Boris Nemtsov, who previously held this post, was named a deputy prime minister, as was Viktor Khristenko, a former deputy finance minister.

The finance minister, Mikhail Zadornov, kept his job, as did the foreign, interior and defence ministers.

Though not in the cabinet, Mr Grachev — who conspicuously acquired a fortune while defence minister between 1992 and 1996 and earned the nickname "Pasha Mercedes" — will be formally and legally in charge of selling weapons this time round, and the state hopes to share the profits.

"Pavel Grachev has wonder-

ful relations with defence ministers in many countries," said Rosvooruzheniye's director, Yevgeny Ananyev. "His ample experience will undoubtedly have a positive effect" on company operations.

Mr Grachev's appointment dampens speculation that he is to be charged by the government prosecution service in connection with the 1994 murder of Dmitry Kholodov, a journalist investigating illegal arms sales during the Russian army's withdrawal from the former East Germany.

President Yeltsin's clear vote of support gives Mr Grachev virtual immunity.

As well as reigning over a rapid rise in corruption in the army during his tenure as defence minister, Mr Grachev bears responsibility — along with Mr Yeltsin — for Russia's defeat in Chechnya, where he deployed the army in 1994.

More than 100,000 deaths ensued, but despite Mr Grachev's unpopularity, it was not until the 1996 presidential elections that Mr Yeltsin finally sacked him.

● The Kremlin denied yesterday that liver problems had stopped President Yeltsin drinking after Japan's former prime minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, said he had been told by President Chirac of France that Mr Yeltsin had had liver trouble and been told to stay off alcohol.

But the Kremlin did say he now preferred red wine to vodka — and had had some for breakfast only that day.

France harkens to 'overworked' pupils' call for a 35-hour week

Paul Webster in Paris

AMBITIOUS parents were put in their place yesterday by a government commission's recommendation that the lycée student's working week should be cut to 35 hours, homework included.

Its six-month inquiry has taken into account the overwhelming complaint in a questionnaire given to children. They said they were working too hard.

Although parents have pressed for a heavier study load, the education minister, Claude Allègre, has been told that schools should come into line with the Socialist policy of a 35-

hour working week for all by 2002.

A thousands students, teachers, parents and officials met in Lyon to discuss 49 lycée reforms.

Sympathy for the students' demands could make these the first important changes to education since May 1968 to be received without protest.

Three million secondary school pupils and their 400,000 teachers were consulted. Three quarters of the students answered the questionnaire, compared to only half the teachers.

The recommendations set a weekly maximum of 28 hours of formal lessons at non-technical schools, compared to 32 at present.

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Living with the euro

But the UK is right to wait

IT IS surprising how long it has taken for people to realise that even though Britain is not joining the European Monetary Union in the first wave, we will nevertheless be faced with the prospect of the euro starting to circulate in Britain of its own accord. The Treasury Select Committee did a service to draw attention to this and other aspects of EMU in its latest report released yesterday. Life won't be the same again after this weekend when the 11 founder members of monetary union will decide among other things the exchange rates at which their currencies will irrevocably join together. The euro has arrived despite all the woe of predictions as recently as 15 months ago that it wouldn't happen. The question now is how far it will infiltrate across the channel and whether its early track record will hasten or retard Britain's own entry. Big companies and financial institutions are already swinging over to the euro in a big way out of self-interest.

Pilkington, the glass company, told MPs it was converting all its systems to using the euro because it would eliminate differences in production costs in different European plants. ICI said that euro cash would spread throughout the economy and Siemens added that even if Britain did not join the single currency, "the euro will come through the back door" because companies and people who are paid in euros will want to spend them in the UK. Sainsbury's says that just as it accepts Irish Pounds in its stores in Northern Ireland, so it will accept

all types of European payments from 2002 (when euro notes and coins start to circulate). Suddenly, there's no need to cash surplus foreign currency when you return from that European holiday.

Members of the public will find it in their self-interest to think in terms of the euro because it will enable them to locate places in Europe where prices (henceforth denominated in the same currency) are cheaper. But the degree to which they take out euro savings deposits, notes and coins, mortgages — or even have their wages paid in euros — will depend on relative inflation rates between the UK and Euroland and the extent to which the Government encourages circulation of the euro as a second currency. One practical factor which will slow the march of the euro is that scarce computer staff will be so tied up with trying to solve the millennium bug that they may not have the resources to convert other systems to the euro.

MPs were right to point out that there could be a cost to not joining the euro if things go wrong for us (as much as 1 per cent of GDP by 2005) and that a true evaluation of the "success" of monetary union will take at least five years because of the need to study the effects over a full business cycle. This is much longer than the political timetable that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have in mind. Equally there is a potentially lethal cost if Britain joined a monetary union which went wrong because (say) European interest rates had to be kept high to stop inflation in France and Germany while the UK economy needed low interest rates to pull it out of recession and high unemployment. Since the potential risks are so high and because (unlike the rest of the EU) there is no big political momentum in the UK for early entry, Britain's decision to watch and wait is the

right one. Let companies and individuals decide to accept the euro or not. The nation can make a collective decision later.

Vintage Paddy

The Lib Dems are a driving force

THIS IS Tony Blair's week as he marks his first year at the summit of British politics. But others should also be marking the anniversary of the May 1 earthquake.

After the Prime Minister, few politicians can reflect on these last 12 months with greater satisfaction than Mr Ashdown. There are rumbles of dissent — most notably from Charles Kennedy — but these should not be taken too seriously: ambitious MPs always like to put down markers. But Mr Ashdown is in strong command, heading a Liberal Democrat party that is getting results.

The Ashdown strategy of co-operation where possible, obstruction where necessary has already borne more fruit for the Lib Dems in a year than they gathered in decades of struggle. The plum of proportional representation has moved from a marginal obsession to a genuine possibility. A Liberal Democrat, Roy Jenkins, chairs a commission on electoral reform which is likely to recommend a form of PR for the House of Commons. PR is already promised in Scotland, Wales and London as well as in next year's elections to the European Parliament. Lib Dem passions — like devolution itself, the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights and a freedom of information act — have become policy. And, to crown it all, the party has seats around the Cabinet table, with places on the committee on constitutional change. Paddy Ashdown likes to joke that the Lib

Dems have effectively staged a reverse takeover of the Labour party.

So much for the "constructive", but what about the "opposition"? Here, too, Liberal Democrats can pat themselves on the back. Malcolm Bruce, not Peter Lilley, pointed out the flaws in Gordon Brown's first budget; they, not the Tories, led the charge against the Government's most unpopular policy: the cut in lone parents' benefit.

More deeply, "constructive opposition" may be more than smart strategy. It could be, as Mr Ashdown boasts, a happy fit with Britain's "new politics": instead of the punch-and-jury of the past, a new, less partisan, more solution-oriented form of national debate. He is convinced that what voters want to see are their politicians working together. Charles Kennedy and others worry that such co-operation is forcing Lib Dems to pull their punches, swallowing them up into the grand New Labour coalition. Eventually, fears Mr Kennedy, voters will have no reason to vote for them at all.

Who is right will not be certain until the next election. If it's fought the way they want it — on a PR system — they are bound to do well. If it's not, and they keep cheering Mr Blair, they may struggle to keep their 48 seats. But such worries are a fair way off. For now, they should stick with the strategy that has served them so well: they are beginning to make some of their dreams come true.

Normal service

Or so MPs like to pretend

WHY is it news when a prominent politician does something normal, like getting on a tube train, riding a bike, shopping, or

eating fast food? The answer is that such occasions are a curious test of authenticity. Pulling them off takes nerve and style. Fumbling such affairs can be a political disaster. President Bush's innocent surprise when a supermarket clerk checked his "purchases" with an electronic reader turned a photo-opportunity into an unscripted pantomime. Bush showed himself to be an ordinary multi-millionaire rather than an ordinary man, which some people found rather sweet but more found irritating.

Britain's new Conservative leader, William Hague, has made several excursions into the land of normality, most famously in a baseball cap and yesterday on the London Underground. Mr Hague's problem is not a lack of sincerity. He comes from a perfectly ordinary background and may well enjoy such activities as whooshing down a swimming pool chute, or even travelling on the tube. But he is too obviously clever, too fascinated by political lore, and, in a word, too odd, to come over well in contrived "normal" roles or in the headgear described by the American scholar Paul Fussell as a "prole cap". It is now widely known that Winston Churchill and Harold Wilson shared a taste for brandy and cigars, but the latter always took care to appear in public with a pipe and a pint. He got away with that, while Churchill was honoured by a whole line in the spoof version of The Red Flag ("We'll make Winston Churchill smoke a Woodbine every day"). Back to the tube, on which Denis Healey genuinely travelled to Westminster during Labour's years in opposition. Asked by an elderly lady why he was using such plebeian transport, old beetle brows supposedly replied: "It's because you kicked me out, my dear." So Mr Hague is in good company.

Letters to the Editor

Cancer, Clinton and the Quiz

HOW convenient for smokers that modern medicine has found a way of reducing their risk of developing cancer (Cancer "Key gene discovery", April 28). How will the new gene pill be marketed — one in every pack of 20? And I wonder which large industry will fund the research? Michael Bond, Luton, Beds.

KEN Norman (Letters, April 25) accuses me of sneering at those who wish to help Louise Woodward (Letters, April 23). The only sneering attitude is that of assuming that every Briton arrested for a crime abroad is innocent, and that every foreigner arrested for a crime in Britain is guilty. The lack of public support for Louise Nicole Sullivan proves this point. Gerard Friel, Old Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire.

JOHN Dean is wrong in suggesting that the "Black and Jew" were the same person. Joey Bishop (Joseph Abraham Gottlieb) was a member of the Rat Pack for much longer than Peter Lawford (Letters, April 28). And, anyway, Dino was much prettier than Rock Hudson. Sue Hornby, Southport, Merseyside.

IS IT true that a poster on a Birmingham bus shelter bears the legend: "Take your dentures out, Marge. Bill Clinton is coming to town." Steve Elliot, London.

WHERE is the Quiz?? What have you done with the Quiz?? Cliff Lovelock, Horley, Surrey. (Marcel Berlins' Quiz and Chris Mastanka's Brain Waves are now in Weekend Sport — Ed.)

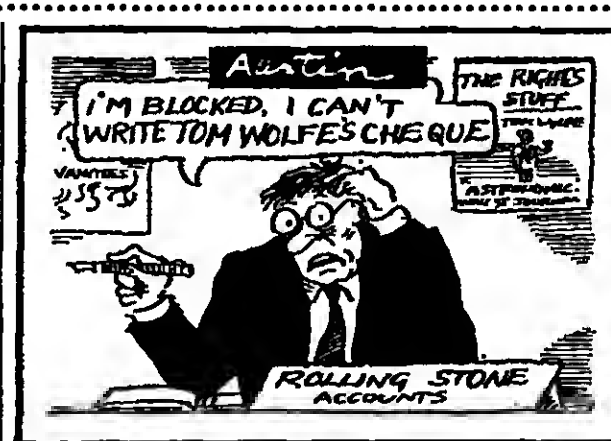
In defence of Mary Bell

MARY Bell committed a terrible crime when she was 11. She was tried and sentenced, and served that sentence. If we believe in our legal system, then we have to accept that, from the moment she left prison, Mary Bell had exactly the same rights and obligations as everybody else (Mary Bell memoir shows lack of remorse, April 28). She has paid her debt to society. If she received money for her collaboration in Gitta Sereny's book, Cries Unheard, she has not broken the law. If it is immoral for Mary Bell to be paid and — as the mother of one of the victims has suggested — she should give her earnings to charity, it is moral for generals or admirals, who have been paid excellent salaries and received substantial perks during their careers, to earn a great deal of money by telling us about wars they conducted and keep it, rather than give it to the British Legion? As a free citizen, Mary Bell should be entitled to do exactly what any other free citizen

can do — and that includes being paid for talking about her life if people want to read about it. Whether she should or shouldn't discuss her past as a matter of respect towards her victims' families is a matter for her and her conscience, not the law. The real issue is the conflict between law, that must be rational, and public emotion, which is not. It is sad to see the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister so eager to respond to the latter. Tom Hackwood, London.

IT IS RIGHT Gitta Sereny's book should be written to illustrate how a child killer is created, what social factors were there to induce a child to such deviant behaviour. Society should be made aware that children such as Mary Bell and the Bulger murderers are victims themselves — of abusive surroundings, neglect, and they are not to be blamed. Then society can watch for the signs in order to prevent further similar events. Mary Bell has been punished and probably scarred herself from the reaction, so the problem left is, should she take the profits? I think if she was seen to donate any profits to a research body or a charity for the relatives of the deceased, this would have a better effect on the public. I cannot believe a child is born evil or that a child is genetically predisposed to evil. Understanding the root cause is the only way forward. The way she has lived since her incarceration is also important. Angela McManus, London.

HOW can two murders followed by 12 years in prison and then 18 months in prison constitute "a life of crime"? How can payments for a book describing those 18 months be described as "assets from a life of crime"? How can Jack Straw contemplate bending the law so it will harm Mary Bell and her daughter simply to appease those who will never be appeased? Michael Catry, Stevenage.



Chapter and verse on first editions

BEFORE your readers rush to their copy of The English Patient and assume it is a first edition worth £250, a warning should apply (See the film but will you seek the book? Jobs and Money, April 26). It is only the first impression (the first print run from the set up type) that is of interest to collectors. Any references to a later impression devalue the book. Modern publishers use a peculiar numbering system to indicate the impression. On the page where the publishing details are printed there will be a series of numbers (1 3 5 7 9 10 3 6 4 2). Only if the "1" is present

is the book a first impression. Another field of interest to collectors of modern firsts is crime novels, where the same rules apply: first novels have low print runs and high subsequent value. A classic example is Minette Walters's first novel The Lie House (500-plus) partly fuelled by the TV series. Lindsay Davis's first novel, The Silver Pig, has a similar premium even without a TV adaptation. Of course, fashion and supply and demand dominate and a scarce book no one wants is valueless. Dave Garnett, Cardiff.

Why I can't be philosophical about Shell's involvement

ON A forthcoming visit to England I had agreed to speak at the Centre for Philosophical Studies at King's College, London. Some weeks later I was disturbed to be told that my lecture was being advertised as supported by Shell UK Ltd. No mention of this funding had been made to me before I accepted the invitation. In view of Shell's appalling record of environmental damage, its lack of respect for the rights of the Ogoni people of the Niger delta, from whose land it takes much of its oil, and its involvement with the Nigerian military regime, responsible for the deaths of Ogoni protesters, including the playwright Ken Saro Wiwa, I was not willing to receive support from any Shell company. I have therefore withdrawn my acceptance of the original invitation. I have been told that cuts to government funding have made it difficult for British

universities to function without seeking money from business. If this is true, it is surely something to deplore. No matter how much a university may protest that money comes with no strings attached, when a centre for philosophy becomes dependent on funding from a corporation like Shell, there is a real danger that the nature of the funding could have an influence, consciously or not, on the activities of philosophers in the centre. Even if this does not occur, the distinction between a truly independent academic and a hired researcher has been blurred, and the prestige of the university in general and its philosophers in particular has been captured by a corporation of dubious ethical standing. Peter Singer, Centre for Human Bioethics, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria.

Hysteria over HIV helps no one

SO here we are again. First, there is no need for the hysteria being whipped up against health workers who have HIV (Mothers alarmed at HIV positive midwife, April 18). There is no recorded evidence of transmission of HIV from health worker to patient in this country. Second, there is no point in compulsory HIV testing (HIV tests urged for pregnant women, April 26). HIV may develop between tests being taken, and the costs of testing everyone are massive. Calls for compulsory testing simply drive people away from services. The focus on the unborn

child never seems to include support for the HIV positive mother; having a test is not giving a cure. Third, it is wrong, counter-productive and unworkable to make HIV transmission a crime (Jail for woman who spread Aids, April 26). The understandable anger of someone who has become HIV positive is not a good reason for a bad law which affects everyone. People must not be deterred from voluntary testing and treatment. What good is served by imprisoning someone with a life-threatening illness? What we need is effective

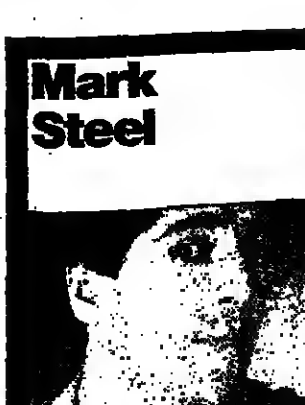
and accurate health education about HIV — we all need to know in everyday language the routes of transmission and the nature of the disease — and we need appropriate treatment and care for people with HIV. The atmosphere generated by the climate of witch-hunting puts more people at risk than anyone who is HIV positive — midwife or mother — ever can. Dr John Nicholson, Director, George House Trust, Manchester. We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters. The Country Diary is on page 10.

Rwanda rights

MARK Lattimer of Amnesty International (Letters, April 27) is wrong to suggest that defence witnesses in Rwanda were frequently intimidated. Mobile brigades of investigations have been set up purely to solve problems of those who could have been arrested arbitrarily. I hope that now Mr Lattimer is convinced that people like Joseph Ruyenzi are not political prisoners as Amnesty had let people believe. I am how-

ever comforted that he is campaigning to bring those who committed genocide to justice. I hope that this campaign extends to those hiding in the Vatican, Paris, Brussels and Nairobi. I would also like to assure Soussa Jamba that the justice system in Rwanda is independent of Rwandan leaders and that punishing those who committed genocide is not savagery but real justice. Dr Zac Ngega, Ambassador, Embassy of Rwanda, London.

Israel and what not



WHEN people turn 50, they often get an urge to prove they can still do things they did in their youth. Some men do this by having an affair with a younger woman. Israel does it by bulldozing a settlement. Just to prove it can still manage it. Yet when Robin Cook tried valiantly to draw attention to this by suggesting he visit a

Palestinian area, he was declared to have made a gaffe. At first an official probably whispered to him: "Look Robin, if you really want to see that bit of land, just come back next year. It'll be Israeli by then." The condemnation of Cook has proved that Israel is considered beyond criticism, like a king in a medieval court. When Cook made his slightly critical remarks, it was as if everybody gasped, there were a few seconds of stunned silence and then an old man in a cloak bellowed: "Woe, for the ginger one has spoken ill of he who must be obeyed." Yet any honest speech made at the birthday party would have to admit it hasn't been the most pleasant 50 years. It would have to acknowledge that the birth itself had complications, with the midwife having to massacre entire villages before the delivery could be made. That shortly afterwards 700,000 Arabs

were driven off their land, which must be the worst ever case of the terrible two. That at the age of 19, like any strappy teenager, it wasn't happy being stuck at home, so moved into illegally occupied territories. That, like most people in their thirties it began to feel the need for privacy, so kept quiet about building a pile of nuclear weapons. And that as it approached 50 it became less tolerant of noise from the neighbours, so demolished their houses. If the West was consistent, there'd be boycotts of their oranges, their dissidents would be hailed as heroes and The Sun would scream that they were smuggling anthrax into Britain in bags. Obviously the reason most people feel reticent about criticising Israel is the tragic history of the Jews which preceded its birth. Though all people wish should the Palestinians be to blame? If Israel

had attacked England or the US for refusing to accept refugees from Nazi Germany, or bulldozed Catholic churches for collaborating with Hitler, you couldn't grumble. But there's little evidence that Hitler was an Arab. INSTEAD Israel owes its very existence to the US, which funded and armed it as its policeman in the Middle East. Though America's dilemma is that sometimes its hard man gets out of control, like Sonny in The Godfather. Occasionally Saddam shouts "asshole", and Israel's out there with a baseball bat while America pleads: "Cool it. This is business, not personal." Other past friends include apartheid South Africa, and the military regimes of Chile and Argentina. For Zionism derives not from resistance to anti-Semitism, but accepting it as inevitable, so building a homeland which is the tool of

a superpower. Which means being friendly with the boss's allies. It also means allowing no possibility of the people you displace having any rights. So the sort of Palestinian state which could be offered was described by the Israeli Labour Party as "a state without might, but with a flag and stamps and what not". Not even an entry in the Eurovision Song Contest. Unless that's included in the what not. Besides, is there any point to a Palestinian postal service? More often than not the postmen would take the letter to the address on the envelope, and find out the street's been knocked down. Not even that is on offer from Netanyahu though, dedicated to the prevention of peace. Instead he's refusing to hand back 13 per cent of the occupied territories, in return for a Palestinian commitment to control their own militants. Which doesn't seem a

bad offer. If you were caught burgling someone's house and they offered to keep quiet if you gave them back 13 per cent of the stuff, it would be quite cocky to shout "And what do I get out this?" Which is why peace will need more than Tony Blair's magical advice for "each side to give a little". Anyway, Blair's advice on how to deal with Islamic teenagers shouting abuse at soldiers will probably be to name and shame their school, and set them an extra 40 minutes a night homework. Instead, if he wants to commemorate Israel's birthday he should just send it one of those jokey cards with a picture on the front of some youths chucking rubble at a tank. And written above it: "Here's some Hamas militants for your 50th birthday." Then inside: "Because at your age it's the only thing you'll see looking hard and rising up."



Big notes will make euro the currency for criminals, page 12
Tomorrow: Birmingham Midshires chiefs quizzed

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Finance Guardian

Bus firms face court

Dan Atkinson and Keith Harper

ALLEGATIONS of price-fixing and secret deals to carve up routes by 10 bus firms are to go before the restrictive practices court after a two-year investigation by the Office of Fair Trading. The court will be asked to rule the deals against the public interest and to prohibit them.

OFT director-general John Bridgeman said: "The suspected secret arrangements among these companies are

likely to have resulted in higher fares". Among those claimed to be victims were children taking off-peak journeys in Liverpool and the Wirral.

The biggest company in the alleged cartel - Merseyside Transport Limited - has already effectively admitted that it is willing to promise the court that these agreements will cease.

MTL, which is owned by 2,000 bus workers, has postponed a flotation because of the OFT's investigation and the forthcoming transport white paper.

The market-fixing claimed by the OFT is said to have taken place in Merseyside and Greater Manchester from 1995 onwards. The OFT added that it was impossible to put a figure on the extra fares paid by people in the region or to calculate the extent to which they were offered poorer services because of the absence of competition.

A tip-off to the OFT's new cartels task force triggered the inquiry in 1995. The task force was set up to gather information on cartel operations and has a dedicated telephone hot-line.

It is open to those brought before the restrictive practices court both to deny that

such agreements exist or to argue that the court ought to accept them as being in the public interest.

Among the agreements cited by the OFT are:

□ Deals in 1995 involving Merseyside Transport with Greater Manchester Buses North and Greater Manchester Buses South, under which the Merseyside firm agreed to pull out of Manchester and the Manchester operators to quit Merseyside;

□ Separate deals involving Merseyside Transport with each of South Lancashire Transport, David Tanner Transport and Nip-On Transport at the end of 1995 and begin-

ning of 1996, whereby the Merseyside operator pulled out of certain St Helens routes in return for the others pulling out of other routes;

□ A deal at the end of 1995 between Merseyside Transport and North Western Road Car Company, under which both prices and service frequencies were carved up;

□ A series of agreements in 1996, among Merseyside Transport, North Western Road Car, C&M Travel, South Lancashire Transport and Hulton Borough Transport relating to fares for children's off-peak journeys in the Liverpool area and to two and three-mile commercial ser-

vices. Another agreement between the Merseyside operator and PMT covered children's off-peak fares.

The move is the latest in a series of OFT investigations into the industry, which was privatised in the mid-1980s. These have involved both price-fixing or so-called predatory pricing aimed at driving competitors off the road.

Margaret Beckett, president of the Board of Trade, is planning legal changes allowing Mr Bridgeman to fine companies. But the current case would be heard under existing law, which provides for penalties only on repeat offences.

Notebook

Trade blow takes toll of Brown plan



Alex Brummer

THE March trade figure is the most ominous place of economic data since Labour came to power a year ago. It was inevitable that the long period of an overvalued pound together with the collapse of the East Asian economies would eventually take their toll both on the trade balance and output, but the downward adjustment threatens to be much more sudden than the Treasury expected.

If this were not enough, the message from exporters, as surveyed by the CBI, is equally disastrous, showing optimism among exporters falling to an 18-year low, a downturn only matched by overall business confidence.

As always, any month's figures can give a false reading. Nevertheless, the underlying picture for trade in goods has, in any case, been worsening. In February the deficit was £2.2 billion, which is more than twice as much as in January.

Normally it can be expected that the booming services sector will repair some of the damage. But the overall trade balance, including services, shows an even worse picture, with the deficit more than tripling from £561 million to £1.7 billion. All this is in line with the worsening of the current account predicted by the IMF, which forecast a deficit of £16 billion (£9.8 billion) this year.

So what will be the consequences of this? In the real economy of growth and job expectations for output, employment and investment will need to be revised down sharply and growth rates slashed. This will be a particular blow to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, since it could get between him and his Welfare to Work programme; hence his decision to try to make sectors of the economy recession-proof.

The traditional means of dealing with swelling trade deficits is to squeeze consumption, to slow imports and create more room for the export sector. That squeeze already has taken place, as a result of action by the Bank of England, but, in effect, has compounded problems by pushing up the pound when it might have been weakening. However, the downward pressure on the economy is now so pronounced that the monetary policy committee will have few excuses to tighten. Sterling's trend may even be downwards.

Bus wars

BACK in the mid-1980s, when water and power privatisation were mere gleams in a think-tanker's eye, when there was no Connex South Central and when

even the world's favourite airline belonged to the Government, Britain's provincial bus services were privatised.

Given the dismal record since then of market-rigging and predatory pricing, it is difficult to see why anybody bothered to do so. Hardly a year has gone by without an Office of Fair Trading probe into uncompetitive behaviour by the heirs of Blakey, Butler and others from On the Buses. To be fair, some of the inquiries have turned up nothing. But far too many have uncovered malpractice.

It appears sometimes that our new breed of bus tycoons seems to divide its working hours equally between trying to drive each other off the road with predatory fares and coysing up to carve up routes and prices. Perhaps they are trying to reconstruct those once-despised public bodies, the passenger-transport executives - with appropriate private-sector rewards for managers, naturally.

Yesterday's OFT reference of a number of alleged market-rigging deals (none proved as yet) to the Restrictive Practices Court may seem merely the latest depressing chapter in the OFT's attempts to referee the bus types.

In fact, it ought to be one of the last of its kind - whatever the outcome. Once the Competition Bill passes into law, the OFT will be able to levy the sort of penalty fares beloved of public utility operators - in 10 per cent of turnover - in cases of anti-competitive behaviour.

That will make even Private Bus think twice.

Biotech rush

IT LOOKS as if British Biotech is finally facing up to its serious situation. A result of the allegations made by its estranged head of clinical research, Andrew Millar.

With the company's share price under pressure and institutional shareholders increasingly wary of a company which has lost a whole layer of top management in a relatively short time, it is now promising to complete its rebuttal of Dr Millar's allegations by May 15 - when it plays host to investors on its research and development day.

Although much of what Dr Millar has had to say is worrying and the alleged share dealings of chief executive Keith McCullagh are no doubt worth a closer look, not all of it makes sense.

His call for an interim review of data relating to large scale trials of Zaccut, the drug being developed against acute pancreatitis, is not seen as the best way forward by his shareholders. It could slow down development of the drug, require the trials to be repeated and be costly when cash is running short.

What British Biotech and Mr McCullagh need to do is convince investors that their procedures are watertight and their management is up to the job of running a research-based public company. Otherwise they will be swallowed, like Fisons, in the blink of an eye.

Sales leap at BSE-test stores

Roger Cowe

KITEMARK organisation the British Standards Institution took its first step yesterday towards becoming a multinational public company.

After gaining the privy council's approval for crucial changes in its royal charter, the BSI borrowed £26 million to help finance the £26.5 million acquisition of international inspection and testing company Inspectorate.

Under the original charter, granted in 1929, the BSI was not allowed to either borrow or make acquisitions. But it has developed commercial activities implementing quality standards and testing and certifying products ranging from

kettles to condoms. These money-making ventures now bring in three times as much money as new standards for industry.

Yesterday's deal will double the size of the BSI's commercial operations, but chief executive Keith Tozzi yesterday said this was still not big enough to be internationally competitive. He set a target of two more acquisitions over the next year, which is likely to involve BSI converting to a public company so that shares can be used to finance the purchases.

"We need to triple our size," he said. "It is quite clear that we have to decide how we are going to finance expansion. Flotation is a possibility, but we have not made a decision on that yet."

TOURIST RATES - BANK SELLS

Australia 2.58	Germany 2.9181	Malaysia 6.28	Singapore 2.81
Austria 20.48	Greece 518.88	Malta 0.5385	South Africa 8.22
Belgium 33.13	Hong Kong 12.80	Netherlands 3.2822	Spain 245.80
Canada 2.349	India 66.37	Norway 2.85	Sweden 12.84
Cyprus 0.8581	Ireland 1.1956	Poland 12.13	Switzerland 2.42
Denmark 11.18	Israel 8.17	Portugal 258.34	Turkey 367.000
Finland 5.92	Italy 2.059	Saudi Arabia 6.17	USA 1.6568
France 6.74			

Supplied by Reuters (excluding rupee, shewal and maldivian)

Shareholders told chief executive's £2.4m pay is worth every penny

SB forced to defend Leschly's pay to investors

Julia Finch

SMITHKLINE Beecham chairman Sir Peter Walters yesterday told shareholders his chief executive, Jan Leschly, was worth every penny of his £2.4 million annual pay package and £80 million of share options.

"We pay for performance," he explained to 750 investors who attended the drug group's annual meeting at London's Barbican. "The total emoluments of all our executives are linked to what they achieve - and they are very demanding targets."

He said he would not provide an excuse for Mr Leschly's record-breaking pay deal. "I am not apologising. It is the world we live in. It is the American system of free enterprise and that is the market we must join."

Sir Peter also heaped blame for the failed merger on Glaxo, for trying to turn the deal into "a takeover without a premium". He cast doubt on their rival's explanation of why the deal had collapsed. "A number of statements," he said, "made by Glaxo chairman Sir Richard Sykes

"are not consistent with Glaxo Wellcome's actions at the time," he said.

SmithKline's saga came two days after Sir Richard signalled he had not yet given up hope that the £100 billion merger could still go ahead, but that "circumstances would have to change", implying that Mr Leschly would have to be removed from SB.

Mr Leschly told shareholders that SmithKline had a bright future as an independent company. "Remember, Glaxo called us, we didn't call them," he told the meeting. Nevertheless he was "disappointed" that the merger fell through - as it could have produced "a great company". He ruled out, however, a merger with Zeneca, saying it was too expensive.

Not all SmithKline shareholders were impressed with their board's explanations, however. "The chief executive says he is disappointed. He damn well ought to be. Some £13 billion was lost when this merger failed and that is a disgrace," one told the directors.

Another pleaded with Mr Leschly: "Could you please take a little less money?" Sir Peter, however, had clearly prepared for an attack on Mr Leschly's pay and displayed a slide showing that in the league table of international drug company bosses, his chief executive ranked eighth. Sir Richard Sykes was ranked 12th.

Another shareholder said Mr Leschly's huge rewards were unjust when compared to the pensions paid to some ex-employees. He described two former Beecham workers, with 17 and 22 years service and paid-up pensions who received £7 and £11 a week respectively. "I know it is legal," he said, "but I think it is despicable." The company said it would look at the matter.



AMERICA'S C200 committee of high-powered and highly-paid top businesswomen is to launch a UK branch.

The Committee, which has 370 members, has invited 40 of Britain's "most powerful and successful businesswomen" to an inaugural meeting at the London Business School tomorrow where Christie Heffer

(above), the chief executive of Playboy Enterprises, best known for its raunchy catwalks and Bunny Girls, will speak.

US businesswomen are way ahead of their UK counterparts. One in ten top US executives are now women.

Those at the London launch will be corporate executives managing div-

isions with a turnover of at least £18 million or entrepreneurs whose businesses generate annual revenue of at least £6 million.

Based in Chicago, C200 was founded 15 years ago and aims to provide women with the equivalent of the traditional "old boys' network" including inspiration and support.

PHOTOGRAPH: WARREN JOHNSON

Tough times for the rich

Dan Atkinson

IT WAS the year the Asian economic meltdown began, the year thousands of jobs were lost across continental Europe, the year of rising interest rates in Britain and belt-tightening from Spain to eastern Germany in preparation for monetary union.

Yes, 1997 spelled toil and trouble for all those engaged in the world economy. Well, for not quite all. For perhaps eight million people - about 0.1 per cent of the human race - 1997 was a year of wine and roses. Or rather, another year of wine and roses. In 1996, they had to struggle along with personal wealth totalling a measly \$16.53 trillion. That is almost £10 thousand billion. In 1997 - despite the economic and market turmoil - this increased to a respectable \$17.4 trillion.

That's \$17,400,000,000,000, or - in a headline about £1,300,000 a head. Chubb together, they could fund HM Government for 34 years.

Investment bank Merrill Lynch, with management consultant Gemini, has been watching the world's dollar millionaires, now known as "high net worth individuals" (HNWIs) - a pool of between six and eight million people who can "show" at least \$1 million in liquid assets.

The Merrill-Gemini 1996 World Wealth Report shows that not only are the rich getting richer, they are set to get richer still. In Europe, for example, "the market will be further boosted by inheritance money and equity releases from the businesses of European entrepreneurs."

Already, Europeans and North Americans account for 59 per cent of HNWIs. But the Asians are shuffling off a \$300 billion drop in the value of their wealth and are expected to account for more than a fifth of HNWIs by the millennium. Latin Americans will account for 16 per cent, and Africans for 2 per cent.

But the HNWIs are discontented with their lot in Europe they seek "higher yields from investment assets" and Japanese millionaires "will continue to demand higher-performing repositories for their wealth".

Some people are never satisfied.

who argue that greater commercialisation will endanger the basic task of standard-setting. He cited a 97 per cent majority at this year's general meeting in favour of such a strategy.

He wants additional funds to buy businesses in North America and Asia.

"We find increasingly that our competitors are between two and three times our size and that our customers are multinationals. Many of them want to buy quality services around the world from a single supplier."

"Inspectorate is a very important acquisition because it moves us from being solely a British-based business to one that really has with global opportunities. But we need further activities in the Americas and China or Japan."

News in brief

Buyse takes over at Vickers

Paul Buyse, who received a £1.4 million compensation package when he quit BTR earlier this year, has been appointed chief executive of Vickers, the defence and motor group currently selling its Rolls-Royce and Bentley luxury car business.

He takes over from Sir Colin Chandler, who remains chairman of Vickers.

The appointment was announced on the eve of the Vickers agm, which is expected to be a rowdy affair with Rolls-Royce car enthusiasts complaining about the car firm's imminent sale to a German group.

Selfridges suffers

Selfridges and Freemans, which will be floated off as

separate companies later this year, were among Sears' subsidiaries which reported lower profits yesterday. Operating profit at Selfridges fell by a third to £25 million.

The result from the flagship store on London's Oxford Street was lower largely as a result of poor Christmas trading. Sales continue to trail behind last year's figures.

Accountants link-up

European Union antitrust regulators will clear the merger of Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand LLP after representatives from the 15 EU countries voted in favour, a spokesman said yesterday.

Friday's majority vote by a committee of national competition officials removed the last hurdle to EU approval for creation of the world's biggest accounting firm.

Kitemark to fly in the world market

Standards agency nurses business ambitions, reports ROGER COWE

KITEMARK organisation the British Standards Institution took its first step yesterday towards becoming a multinational public company.

After gaining the privy council's approval last week for crucial changes in its royal charter, the BSI borrowed £26 million to help finance the £26.5 million acquisition of international inspection and testing company Inspectorate.

Under the original charter, granted in 1929, the BSI was not allowed either to borrow or make acquisitions. But it has developed commercial activities implementing quality

standards, such as BSI 5750, testing and certifying products from kettles to condoms.

These ventures now bring in three times as much money as developing new standards for industry.

Yesterday's deal will double the size of the BSI's commercial operations, but chief executive Keith Tozzi yesterday said this was still not big enough to be internationally competitive. He set a target of two more acquisitions over the next year, which is likely to involve BSI converting to a public company so that shares can be used to finance the purchases.

"We need to triple our

size," he said. "I would be very disappointed if, over the next 12 months, we hadn't picked up another two businesses. It is quite clear that we have to decide how we are going to finance expansion. Flotation is a possibility, but we have not made a decision on that yet."

Neither managers nor the BSI's 22,000 corporate members would be in line for windfall gains on flotation.

The organisation was established by the engineering profession in 1901 to develop common standards - initially for the railways.

But it is a "charter body" with no shareholders, so the BSI's proceeds would go straight to the BSI's coffers.

Mr Tozzi, a former technical director of Southern Water, dismisses those critics

Barclays hit by pension protest

PENSIONERS demonstrated outside Barclays Bank's annual meeting in Westminster yesterday, calling for an end to a practice known as "pensions clawback", writes Rupert Jones.

Almost half of the UK's private employers' final salary pension schemes deduct some or all of the basic state pension allowance, according to the unions co-ordinating the campaign.

More than 2.5 million pensioners have an average of £3,300 a year "grabbed back" by their former employers, claims banking union Unifi, which is calling for the practice to be made illegal. Barclays is one of many employers to have benefited, it claimed.

Employers argue that as they pay National Insurance as well as contributions into the pension fund, they are in effect paying for two pensions. Barclays said it limits the deduction to a maximum of 50 per cent of the basic state pension.

PHOTOGRAPH: GARY WEAVER



Underworld may target the euro

Big notes drugs fear

Mark Atkinson in Paris

HIGH-denomination euro banknotes may have to be rationed to prevent them falling into the hands of Latin American drug dealers and the Russian mafia and being used in money laundering operations, Belgium's Finance Minister, Philippe Maystadt, warned yesterday.

Fears have been expressed that the euro could quickly supersede the US dollar as the criminal underworld's currency of choice because of the ease with which it will be able to be carried across borders.

Whereas \$1 million in hundred dollar banknotes, the highest denomination printed, would fill a large suitcase, \$1 million in 500-euro notes could perhaps be stashed in a large handbag.

Speaking after a meeting of the Financial Action Task Force, the world's leading anti-money laundering authority, Mr Maystadt, who is its chairman, said the usual steps would be taken to prevent criminals converting national currencies into euros when the euro coins begin circulating in 2002. These included banks notifying the authorities they were suspicious about the legality of a transaction.

Mr Maystadt said that the European Central Bank, which will run the euro, may decide to restrict the volume of high denomination notes it prints.

"Most European governments are attentive to avoid



An expensive habit... New high-value banknotes are likely to make the euro the preferred currency for drug dealers

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID HOFFMAN

facilitation of money laundering," Mr Maystadt said. "We will keep an eye on this and, if necessary, in due time we will take the measures to combat this new development if it takes place."

Mr Maystadt said the final decision on the quantity of high-denomination euro banknotes to be printed rested with the ECB, which is meant to be ringfenced from political interference by national governments.

He said, however, that the ECB would not operate in a vacuum and that it would co-operate with other institutions, such as the FATF.

Yesterday's meeting of the FATF, which took place in Paris at the annual two-day ministerial meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, was the second since it was formed in 1989.

Its 28 members include most members of the OECD.

Mr Maystadt said the battle against money laundering was a continuous process, with the authorities racing to keep up with techniques used by criminals.

In addition to the opportunities presented by the arrival of the euro, the FATF has identified the Internet as

another method of laundering dirty money.

But the FATF President, Jean Spreutels, said the authorities had not yet detected it being used in this way.

The counter measures are preceding the threat itself," he said.

Mr Maystadt said several ministers at the meeting had mentioned money laundering operations in central and eastern Europe and Mr Spreutels identified Africa as a problem zone.

● The OECD agreed yesterday agreed not to lower taxes to draw capital away from other countries, and to

rewrite tax treaties with countries that act as tax havens.

However, the scope of the new accord was weakened when Luxembourg and Switzerland, the two OECD members most often accused of using tax policies to lure investment, said they would not sign it.

They both objected to language in the accord identifying bank secrecy as a source of "harmful tax competition".

The accord is not binding. It works, said Jeffrey Owen, head of the OECD's fiscal division, on the principle of "peer pressure".



Bargain hunters eye up the tigers

MARK MILNER and JULIA FINCH see how crisis can beget opportunity

IT WAS dubbed the Asian contagion. Meltdown in the region's financial markets sent shock waves round the world. From Bangkok to Seoul, officials from the international Monetary Fund popped up at regular intervals to slap another multi-billion dollar strip of financial band-aids on a haemorrhaging financial system.

True to management-speak, however, for some last year's crisis is threatening to turn into this year's opportunity.

As a measure of stability, the returns to Asia's financial markets and the prospect of a further downturn recedes (though it has by no means disappeared), the bargain hunters are emerging.

"People have been studying the corporate sector [in the region] for the last six months, looking for deals which are cheap and where there is a reasonable outlook," says Bernard Godement, chief macroeconomist at Daiwa Institute of Research in London.

It is not just a question of money. International investors get a warmer reception than in the past. As Bernard Eschweiler, an analyst at investment bank JP Morgan, noted in a recent circular: "With governments' fiscal resources limited and private domestic resources largely depressed, foreign capital will have to play a key role in funding the recapitalisation of banks and buying distressed assets."

To that end, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the region's governments have been lifting restrictions on foreign ownership.

Thailand, where the crisis surfaced last summer, is already coming under the spotlight. Dutch bank ABN AMRO is buying 75 per cent of Thailand's Bank of Asia; the Bank of Nova Scotia is taking over Nakornthabon

Many Asian companies will be looking for partners

BASF spent \$600 million (€600 million) buying Daesang Group of South Korea's animal feed additive division. Southern Electric splashed out \$2.29 billion on Consolidated Electric Power Asia.

Foreign corporates may not need to go shopping. Deals may well come to them. "Many [Asian] companies will be looking for partners, especially as they find it difficult to get finance from their usual lenders," says Mr Godement.

Not that anyone should get too excited. Reports of the death of Asian capitalism are likely to prove as exaggerated as earlier suggestions of the invincibility of the Asian tigers. Acquisitions of Asian companies accounted for just 5 per cent of the global take-over total last year.

The crisis may have pushed the door to foreign investment in corporate Asia further open; that does not of itself convert the region into a risk-free buyers' market.

Foreign ownership limits

Country	General	Financial sector
Indonesia	Foreign ownership limited to 49%	Foreign ownership limited to 49%
Japan	No limits	No limits
Malaysia	Foreign ownership limited to 49%	Foreign ownership limited to 49%
South Korea	50% for stocks, to be lifted by the end of 1998	100% for banks with special permission
Thailand	100% for banks with special permission	100% for banks with special permission

'Five years to judge' whether UK should join

Michael White and Charlotte Denny

THE Government's "wait and see" policy on joining the single currency came under attack yesterday from an influential parliamentary committee said it would be impossible to judge whether Britain should join for at least five years.

The report from the Treasury select committee casts doubts on the Government's timetable for a referendum early in the next parliament.

But while united in casting doubts on the Government's timetable, the select committee is hopelessly divided on whether UK membership is a good idea. It says it will be impossible to judge whether joining would meet the five economic tests laid down by the Chancellor until at least the year 2003.

The hurdles which the Gordon Brown has set before Britain can join include sustainable convergence between Britain and the economies of a single currency; flexibility to cope with economic change; the effect on investment; the impact on tax; and whether it is good for employment.

While the committee endorses Mr Brown's tests, it says the Treasury should make it clearer in which

areas economic convergence would be sought.

In the event that Britain decides to join, the committee says the Government should publish a national change-over plan to address problems.

The committee also put the Chancellor under pressure for this weekend's meeting of EU heads of state to solve the row between potential EMU members over who should head the body which will set single currency interest rates.

France and Germany are at loggerheads over who will run the European Central Bank, and the committee warns Britain "must ensure that the choice of participants and any compromise reached on the Presidency of the ECB are credible and consistent with the [Maastricht] Treaty's requirements."

While the report was endorsed unanimously, the committee failed to paper over fundamental divisions about UK membership.

At a bold press conference, three of the four Tory MPs on the committee made plain their scepticism. Sir Teddy Taylor, saying "The report is saying nothing about nothing." Labour and Liberal Democrats, including left-winger Brian Sedgemore, expressed varying degrees of enthusiasm.

New coins just the job for Italy's Romeos

THE euro may be unloved and unwanted in Britain but in Italy, straining at the leash to be admitted to the first wave at this weekend's summit, it is bound to be a hit in one unexpected quarter — public toilets, writes David Goo.

Few of these boast condom slot-machines because the biggest Italian coin, the 500 lire piece, is worth just about the equivalent of 17p in Britain, with its price coins worth nearly 3000 lire, there are six times as many condom dispensers.

But, according to Hattico Commercial SPA, a condom-maker, the euro will change all that when it replaces national currencies from January 2002.

The two-euro coin, worth 4000 lire or around £1.30 at today's exchange rates, will boost the company's slot-machine trade substantially — with more people able to make purchases before the machines are full — as well as bringing lower prices.

It will be a far cry from the days of mega-inflation in Italy, where gaming slot-machines like one-armed bandits are banned. Then the coins were of such little (and rapidly declining) value shops would give telephone tokens or even sweets as change.

Investment talks falter

Mark Atkinson in Paris

WESTERN governments yesterday cobble together a face-saving arrangement to keep alive controversial plans for a set of binding international rules on investment. There were, however, varying interpretations of what had been decided — and why.

After failing to meet this month's deadline to sign the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), ministers from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development agreed that the discussions should undergo "a period of assessment and

consultation" before resuming formally in October.

France's junior European minister, Pierre Moscovici, backed by Canada, claimed that this amounted to a suspension of the talks. He is under pressure to protect the French film industry from being swamped by Hollywood blockbusters.

But OECD Secretary-General Donald Johnston insisted: "It's not really a delay." He said governments could be able to use the next six months to persuade politicians, non-governmental organisations and the public of the importance of the MAI.

Discussions on the MAI began in 1995 with the aim of

drawing up a set of rules that would protect foreign investors from discrimination by national governments.

But they have been bogged down by disagreements over, for example, whether or not to include tough environmental or labour protection clauses.

France has spearheaded calls for exemptions and the MAI has also run into trouble in the United States where a coalition of trade unionists and environmentalists on the left and anti-free traders on the right, could upset its passage through Congress and where legislation governing firms which trade with Cuba may cause difficulties.

Beckett warns of euro fall-out

DAVID GOW reports on DTI concerns that UK business is ignoring monetary union

TRADER and industry secretary Margaret Beckett yesterday warned British companies that the arrival of the euro next year could swiftly expose their lack of competitiveness and efficiency, even though Britain will remain outside the single currency.

Amid fresh evidence that the majority of companies have done nothing to prepare for economic and monetary union, Mrs Beckett will next week spearhead a joint drive by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury to get British business

ready for the single currency's impact from its launch date of January 1 next year.

Mrs Beckett said: "The euro will expose very clearly those companies which are genuinely competitive, efficient and cost-effective and those which are not, but have previously been shielded by movements in exchange rates."

The Government says productivity levels in British firms are up to 40 per cent behind those of their international rivals, and this gap will be highlighted by the euro.

Multinationals such as car firms have already indicated

they will begin pay negotiations in the euro, raising union fears that greater clarity about costs could hasten plant closures and job cuts.

Mrs Beckett's comments came as a survey by the Bank of Ireland found that only 7 per cent of UK firms had done anything to prepare for EMU, with 51 per cent believing it will have little impact. Business people, at 23 per cent, were only slightly more aware of the euro than the public, at 18 per cent.

The survey found that 84 per cent of respondents could not name the start date of monetary union, 81 per cent could not name the single currency and 25 per cent were unable to name a single participating country.

Guardian Wednesday April 29 1998

Every open doors for S...

Foot off but Sagaro Stakes...

Hampton (N.H.) with fo...

245...

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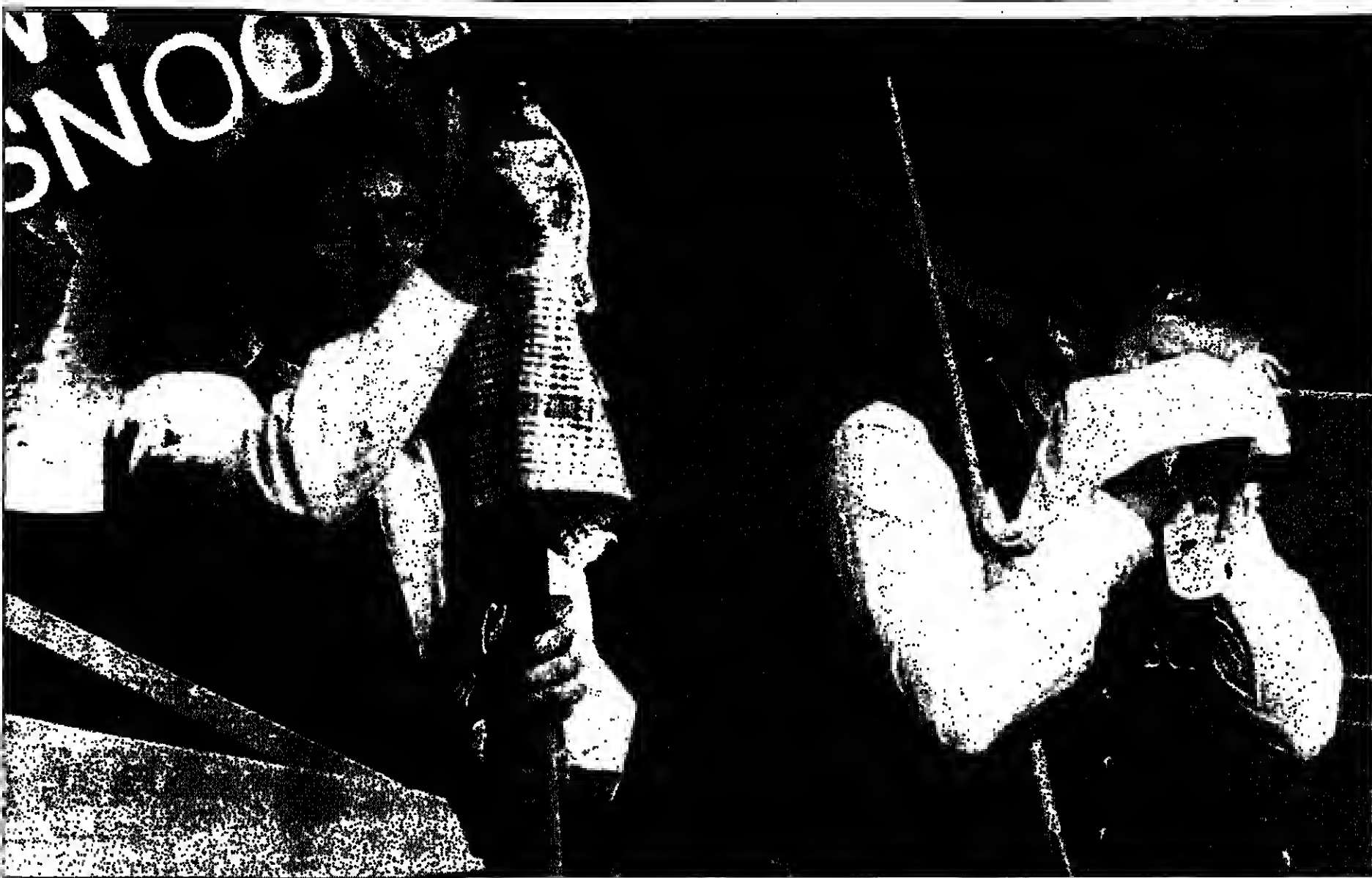
120...

155...

صلى الله عليه وسلم

SportsGuardian

Hard grind at The Crucible



An afternoon of errors draws the devil from the whirlwind

A paler shade of White... after surprising even his most loyal admirers with runaway wins over Stephen Hendry and Darren Morgan in the opening rounds of the world snooker championship, Jimmy White lost the plot at the Crucible Theatre. He mops his face here during a disastrous quarter-final session against Ronnie O'Sullivan, who resumes 7-1 ahead today in the race to reach 13 frames. Clive Everton reports from Sheffield, page 13

Feeling faint and it's not the hemlock



Paul Weaver

THE national debate rages on. For my two-pennorth I think five is far too young to be introduced to something potentially so addictive and ruinous.

It can divide families, empty your pockets and destroy your health. Football, like drugs, can tip you over the edge. I have just been attempting to analyse England's World Cup chances and a drowsy numbness pains my senses, as though of hemlock I had drunk.

Just a few weeks ago the football people of these islands were discussing serious matters, such as whether England should play a flat back-four or three, with two wing-backs; now all the talk is of whether Glenn Hoddle is a footballer or a penalty shoot-out.

The World Cup has become a giggle-fest. And it will not stop there. What is going on? Yesterday we were introduced to Mystic Greg, John Gregory, the Aston Villa manager, revealed his faith in the powers of astrology in the *Daily Mirror* and how he makes regular visits to his clairvoyant in Leicester.

Gregory, a Taurus, also consults his stars on a regular basis. The same paper carried the sad little story of how the TV chat show host Judy Finnigan had consulted the England football team's faith healer Eileen Drewery over a sore knee and immediately twisted her ankle so badly that she was forced to go on air barefoot. "I'm in a lot of pain," she said.

Ted Dexter could have warned Hoddle. Dexter was brave and brilliant and if he had been an officer in the trenches you would have followed him with a fixed eye and a fistful of Brooke all the way to a posthumous VC. But once Dexter, as chairman of the England cricket selectors, started talking about planetary alignments he was, for a great many people, reduced to a babbling loon.

Personally, I do not care whether Hoddle has gone as soft as a punctured Miln. You can make a case for a number of the successful managers in football history being as mad

as Lear. It would, however, be reassuring if Hoddle had football at the forefront of his mind, and not how he might bend one round Uri Geller's defensive wall.

It would be nice, too, if he silenced Ms Drewery, whose ridiculous claims include one that she cured Paul Merson's drug problem in a single meeting and another that she asked God not to let Ian Wright score in the World Cup qualifying decider in Rome to avoid crowd trouble.

Until he does so we will have to endure the reality that England's World Cup campaign has been reduced to little more than a feeding station for stand-up comics.

And wherever Hoddle goes there will be the background noise of muffled chorles, those behind-the-hand sniggers and titters we normally associate with children at church or at picnics when Grandpa has trodden in the trifles.

"I don't give two monkeys what anyone thinks," he says. "The only view that counts is mine."

Being your own man is one thing. Not listening, like ostriches and Iron Ladies, is quite another. It is a weakness.

Those of us who do give two monkeys about the England football team, and how they might fare in France, are being drawn towards finding our own faith healers.

HODDLE and his helpers do not represent the only madness about. There is also a nice little story that Wimbledon Football Club, having, sadly, decided against moving to Dublin, are now looking in the direction of Hull.

This reminds me of a tale concerning that wonderful poet Philip Larkin, who should be played by Richard Wilson if they ever make a film of his life.

The marvellously miserable Larkin, the long-serving Hull librarian, was once questioned as to why he chose to live in the town.

He fixed his interrogator with a bleak eye and replied: "So I don't get bothered by the likes of you. Once journalists have found Hull on the map they decide that it's far too difficult to travel to and decide to go off and bother someone else."

England face world rugby ban

The RFU has been ordered to a Dublin summit to spell out a battle plan to bring its upstart clubs into line, reports Paul Rees

ENGLAND have been told they will be expelled from world rugby union unless the militant clubs in the Premiership are brought to heel.

The governing International Rugby Board has banned the 12 clubs in Premiership One, who have mounted a legal challenge to the IRB's rules and by-laws, from having any playing contact with its 82 member nations.

If the Rugby Football Union were expelled from the IRB, it would cost the English game tens of millions because England, who are due to stage matches in next year's World

Cup would be denied all international contact.

The RFU has been ordered to attend a meeting of the board's executive committee in Dublin on May 18 to explain its position and how it intends to bring into line the leading clubs, who have prepared an application to be heard soon by the European Commission seeking to have certain powers devolved from unions to clubs.

The South African, Australian and New Zealand unions have been unimpressed with the threats of English clubs to stop their players going on England's tour of the southern hemisphere this summer and

have called for decisive action by the RFU, which has still to appoint a chief executive after the resignation of Tony Hallett eight months ago.

"The rugby world outside England finds it difficult to comprehend why the problems caused by a small group of individuals, whose declared intent is to destroy the existing governance of the game, have not been resolved," said the chairman of the Australian Rugby Union, Dick McGrath.

"The IRB has allowed the RFU sufficient time to sort things out. We find it a cause of concern that the RFU is in discussion with clubs whose declared aims are so clearly and unequivocally contrary to the union's constitution and the IRB's position."

"It is time for the English union to start governing. This is no longer a purely

English dispute. It is affecting other countries and enough is enough."

Many of the elite clubs are owned and the benefactors, headed by Newcastle's Sir John Hall, have no time for protocol. Having pumped millions into club rugby, they argue that they should be allowed to do business by the competitive they play in, principally the Premiership and the Heineken European Cup, rather than relying on the RFU for hand-outs.

The elite have demanded the two-division Premiership be expanded from 24 to 28 clubs; they have held talks with Welsh clubs about a joint competition, without the RFU's consent; and they are not willing to accept the IRB's by-law which gives unions the first call on players.

England's summer tour of

South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, which takes in four Test matches and is part of a television deal the three southern unions have signed with the Murdoch organisation, has been threatened by the potential non-availability of at least 12 players.

"The IRB's rules are there to be abided by," said the board's chairman Vernon Pugh, who last week warned the RFU it faced immediate expulsion if Cardiff, which is taking the Welsh Rugby Union to the High Court, were invited into the Premiership.

"The only mechanism for change is through the democratic process within the IRB. The major southern-hemisphere unions cannot understand why the RFU has allowed this problem to fester and, with the World Cup little more than a year away, wants things sorted out quickly."

"The board is not prepared to be dictated to by clubs. Our responsibility is to the game throughout the world, not just a small part of it, and our message to the RFU is simple: if you are not prepared to get a grip, we will. If it means expelling England from the IRB, and thereby the world game, so be it."

With so many Welsh, Irish and Scottish players contracted to Premiership clubs, the Celtic nations' summer tours are also being hit. "Scotland (who tour Australia) will be without five players, four from Newcastle," said Australia's McGrath, "and there are doubts about how many of the Ireland team will be going to South Africa. Only players who have medical clearance should be exempt from touring."

Robert Armstrong, page 15

Hull woos the wandering Dons

Martin Thorpe and Michael Walker report on a surprising development in the south London club's search for a new home

HAVING failed in their attempt to relocate in Dublin, Wimbledon's policy of trying any port in a storm could take them to Hull.

The chairman and owner of the Third Division's Hull City, David Lloyd, yesterday revealed that he has talked with Wimbledon's joint-owner Sam Hammam about the possibility of the Premiership side moving to Humberside and playing in a new 40,000-seat stadium, alongside City and Hull Sharks rugby league club, which the ambitious Lloyd also owns.

It would be a revolutionary move in which Lloyd would effectively be buying a Premiership place and taking football nearer the American franchise system. But it is a plan which could meet a need

for Wimbledon, who have been searching for their own home since leaving Plough Lane in their local borough of Merton to share Crystal Palace's Selhurst Park in 1991.

Recently Hammam said the club would wither and die unless it found its identity with a stadium of its own, encouraging bigger crowds and giving more commercial scope.

Hammam had been close to pulling off a move to Dublin until opposition from the Football Association of Ireland and Fifa forced him to reconsider the idea. There is also the possibility that Wimbledon could build a new stadium near Gatwick airport, but since the Dublin knock-back the club have been readjusting their sights.

"In my opinion, if we had

a team in Hull that was winning, the support would be fanatical," said Lloyd, who knows Hammam well. "That has been proved with the rugby this season. A stadium of 30-to-40,000 would fill every match."

"I'm looking at every avenue to achieve that. And though no decisions have been made or negotiations taken place, I have spoken to Sam on the phone. I told him I was sorry Dublin did not work out too well and asked him what his options are now."

Hammam was unavail-

able for comment yesterday and Wimbledon's chief executive David Barnard was unwilling to say anything other than "our first priority is a return to Merton".

A proposal to move into the greyhound stadium next door in Plough Lane was recently knocked back by Hammam as being too impractical. But there is real hope at the club that after the May local elections the Labour-run Merton council will feel free to put its weight behind Wimbledon "going home".

Certainly the Premier League and the Football League have nothing in their rulebooks to prevent Wimbledon moving to Hull, though the matter would

have to be approved by a vote of clubs.

However, it is too early to say how any proposed move would be structured — would Wimbledon change their name, for instance — but Lloyd stressed that he did not want to merge Wimbledon with struggling Hull City. "I want Hull City to remain as a football club."

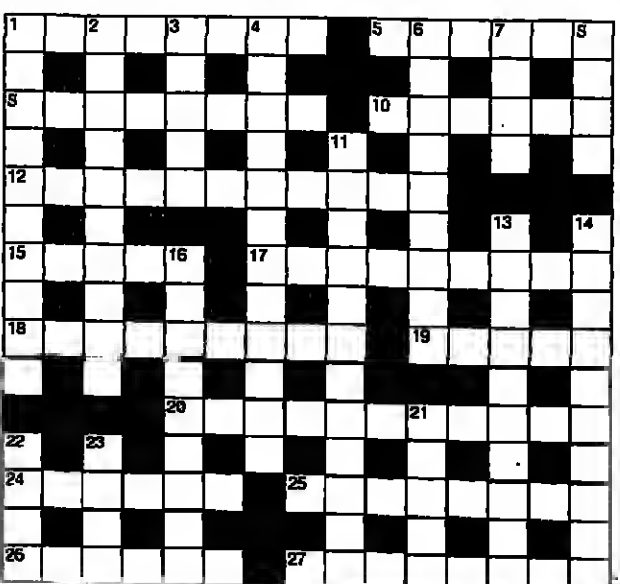
The idea of a move to Hull is opposed by the Wimbledon fans. Xavier Wiggins of the Independent Supporters' Association said: "People think they can buy this Premiership franchise that is Wimbledon and transfer it and be successful. The whole thing would be an insult."

However, the idea of a club moving abroad is about to become a reality. The Scottish club Clydebank are close to finalising a deal which will see them playing in Dublin next season. And that could provide the precedent others might want to take advantage of.

'If we had a team in Hull that was winning, the support would be fanatical' — David Lloyd

Guardian Crossword No 21,261

Set by Bunthorne

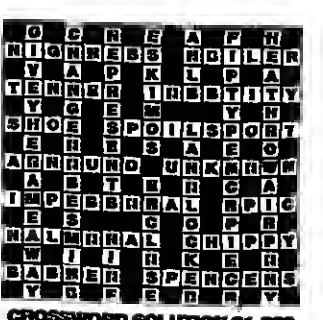


Across

- 1 British lion has ceded sole protection (8)
- 5 Silver plate a splendid backing for one of Canova's trio (6)
- 9 Independence worth its weight in gold. O, My! (6)
- 10 See 12
- 12, 10 Tin beads once might crack any roset chestnut, right? (3,8,6)
- 15 Substantial worthy licence-holder (5)
- 17 Vis-à-vis Carl, who composed "English Volcano" without reflection (9)
- 18 So Rassendyll was to face king in a lie (4-5)
- 19 Swelling journalist with English degree (5)
- 20 "Lol No smoking" confounded mine proprietor (4,7)
- 24 Wrack left in the bay (6)

Down

- 2 Uninvolved man who absorbed art before the French (5-5)
- 3 "Some do it with a —" (Wide's draughtly air?) (6,4)
- 4 Tubar a number found in a furrow (5)
- 6 Jeremiah's mental torture at the destruction of Sion (12)
- 8 Junk room left in bloody mess (5,4)
- 7 Original articles going out in a blaze of glory (4)
- 8 A capital band too (4)
- 11 High in mid-Atlantic? (4-4-4)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,260

- 13 Reduce resistance lest alman suffer (10)
- 14 Withholding one meant trouble in the depression (10)
- 16 Tell eg drug's stolen? (5,4)
- 21 Bloodthirsty law lord sequesters smallest state (5)
- 22 Lincoln died in his sleep (4)
- 23 The Shakespearean disposition (4)

Solution tomorrow

22 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0951 336 238. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ABS.

Gilmour, 36, has been on the run for 15 years, sleeps with a Browning pistol under his pillow and has no idea what has happened to his daughter and son.

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سكرا من الامل